

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ

# Tafsīr al-Kāshānī

*Great Commentaries  
on the Holy Qur'ān*

Part I  
Sūrahs 1–18



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FONS VITAE



All praise belongs to God whose arrangements<sup>1</sup> of His [Qur’ānic] speech He has made to be the manifestations of the beauty (*ḥusn*) of His attributes and the rising stars (*ṭawāli*)<sup>2</sup> of His attributes [to be] the rising points (*maṭāli*) of the light of His essence. He has purified the channels of audition in the hearts of His elect (*aṣfiyā*) so that the audition may be realised. He has refreshed the sources of the sensory faculties of comprehension in His friends (*awliyā*) so that the beholding may be certain. He has made their innermost hearts sensitive to [the divine] subtleties by the irradiation of rays of love within them. He has made their spirits yearn to witness the beauty of His countenance, [only possible] by means of their annihilation (*fanā*); but when He cast upon them [His] speech they found spiritual comfort in it by morning and evening. Through that [speech] He brought them closer and closer to Him so that they became in near communion with Him.<sup>3</sup> Thereat He purified their souls with Its manifest aspect (*ẓābir*) so that It became like gushing water and He replenished their hearts with Its inner aspect so that it became like a surging sea. And when they wanted to dive [into It] to extract the pearls of its mysteries, the waters rose high above them and they were drowned by its torrent. Yet the riverbeds of understandings continued to flow [in a measure] commensurate with their capacities by that inundation [of His words], while the streams of intellects flowed over into rivers [just] by the sprinkled moisture [of His speech]. There the riverbeds exposed upon the shores dazzling gems and pearls, while the streams caused blooming flowers and [abundant] fruits to sprout upon the banks. With the deluge of their [the streams’] flow, hearts – standing still at their limits – set about filling every seal and every breach, unable to number these. Souls set about harvesting fruits and rays of light, offering thanks in their [states] of ecstasy (*wajd*), fulfilling therewith their [innermost] desires. As for the innermost hearts (*asrār*), when their hearing is struck by those striking verses,<sup>4</sup> they listen up and become aware through these [striking verses] of the risings of [His] attributes, becoming perplexed by their beauty upon seeing them, bewildered and confused at their self-disclosure. They [their innermost hearts] begin to come apart until their spirits have reached their collar-bones whereupon there rises afterwards the beautiful appearance of His enduring

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<sup>1</sup> Literally, the points or loci which distinguish Qur’ānic semantic units from one another and which taken as a whole constitute the inimitable ‘arrangement’ (*naẓm*) of God’s speech. The point, it seems, is that these semantic breaks or divisions are where the esoteric meanings are located and whence the mystical allusions emerge.

<sup>2</sup> The Arabic in several instances in this passage plays on the root (*ṭ-l-*).

<sup>3</sup> Of course, this state of near communion is ‘salvation’, a signification already implicit in related forms for both words: *najāt* and *khalāṣ*.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Q. 101, the *sūra* entitled *al-Qāri’a*. The sense here is that of verses that have a profound effect upon the listener, on account of their content.

countenance and that witnessing decrees the negation of their existence, obliging them to affirm [the truth of the witnessing itself]. So glory be to Him besides Whom there is no god, the One, Almighty. Glory be to Him Who discloses Himself in His speech, by means of the garb of the attributes of His majesty and beauty, to His servants in the form of the splendour of His essence and perfection. Blessings be upon the blessed tree [sc. Muḥammad] whom He has made enunciate this speech and whom He has made its source and origin, [being] from It, for It and to It, and peace be upon it and his family who are the storehouses of His knowledge and mighty Book, and upon his Companions through whom the religion [of Islam] has found itself in an impregnable sanctuary.

To wit: for a long time I was in the habit of reciting the Qurʾān, pondering its meanings with the power of faith. Despite the observance of my litanies, my breast remained constricted, my inner heart anxious, and my heart never [quite] expanding by [the meanings of] these [verses]. Yet, still my Lord would not turn me away from them, until [eventually] when I became intimate with them and [grew] fond of them, I tasted the sweetness of their cup and I drank [from] it. Through these [meanings] I then became a spirited soul, my breast split open, a patient mind with a joyous heart, a secret broadened, my days and states made good, my spirit rejoicing in that triumph seemingly continuous, [like a drink taken] by night and day.

Behind every verse would be revealed to me meanings which my tongue was incapable of describing. Neither [my] power was sufficient to record or number them, nor [my] strength could endure to divulge or expose them. I then remembered a report that had come [to me] – [but] which had not aroused in me [any interest], since it was beyond my aims and aspirations [at that time] – the saying of the unlettered (*ummi*), truthful, Prophet, the most excellent blessings be upon him from every silent and [every] speaking thing: ‘No verse of the Qurʾān has been sent down except that it has an exterior (*ẓāhir*) and an interior (*batn*), with every letter (*ḥarf*) having a limit (*ḥadd*), every limit a look-out point (*muṭṭalaʿ*)’. I understood from this [statement] that the exterior is exoteric exegesis (*tafsīr*), while the interior is esoteric interpretation (*taʾwīl*). The limit is the most that the [faculties of] comprehension can attain from the significations of the speech, while the look-out point is that [point] from the limit to which he [the believer] rises and comes to partake in the witnessings of the Omniscient King. And indeed it has been transmitted from the foremost, truth-affirming imam, Jaʿfar b. Muḥammad al-Ṣādiq, peace be upon him, that he said: ‘Verily God has disclosed Himself to His servants in His speech, but you fail to see [that]’. It is also related from him, peace be upon him, that he fell down unconscious during prayer and when he was

asked about that, he said: 'I kept repeating the verse until I [eventually] heard it from the One Who had spoken it'.

I therefore deemed [it fit] that I should append some of what occurs to my mind at certain times in the way of the mysteries of the interior realities and the lights of the dawning places of the look-out points (*muṭṭalaʿāt*), to the exclusion of what pertains to the exterior [aspects] and the limits (*ḥudūd*), since for these a defined limit [of meanings] has been assigned.

Now, they say that he who explains (*fāssara*) [the Qurʾān] on the basis of opinion (*raʾy*) has verily become a disbeliever (*kāfir*), and as for [esoteric] interpretation (*taʾwīl*) that 'it neither spares nor leaves behind',<sup>5</sup> for it differs in accordance with the [different] states and moments of the listener along the stages of his wayfaring (*sulūk*) and by the variation of his degrees (*daraja*). Whenever he rises from his station (*maqām*) [to a higher one], a new gate of understanding opens up for him, through which he becomes aware of a subtle meaning pre-prepared [for him]. I thus embarked on drafting these pages [of interpretation] to the extent to which the mind (*khāṭir*) might permit by way of what has been agreed upon [as acceptable], without hovering over the plain of exoteric exegesis nor delving into the abyss of look-out points that cannot be affirmed, all the while respecting the arrangement and order of the scripture, but without repeating [the exegesis] of what [verses] it reiterates or what [parts of it] resemble other parts of it by way of style. All that does not submit to interpretation (*taʾwīl*) as I see it, or does not require it, *a priori* has not been presented [here]. Nor do I claim to have reached the limit [of mystical interpretation] for what I have presented, no indeed. For the aspects of understanding cannot be confined to what I have understood. The knowledge of God cannot be restricted to what I have come to know. Nevertheless, my [capacity of] understanding has not ceased with what I have mentioned here. Rather, perhaps certain [additional] aspects of [understanding] what has been written have occurred to me, except that I became lost in all of its content. As for what can be interpreted of those stipulations, by which, on the face of it, [only] the manifest sense is intended,<sup>6</sup> I only interpreted slightly so that it may be known that there is a [proper] way to understanding such [verses] and that by this method [the meanings of] other analogous [verses] can be inferred if one were to go beyond the explicit sense [of such verses], for inevitably there will be an element of arbitrariness in interpreting them. The

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. Q. 74:28, where the same expression is used of the Hellfire *saqar*.

<sup>6</sup> In other words, legal verses of the Qurʾān by which is intended simply that exoteric sense, the manifest meaning.

mark of virtue (*muruwwa*) is to abandon such artificiality. Perhaps superior aspects [of interpretation] will occur to someone other than me who is more amenable to being led [to them]. For that is indeed an easy thing in the case of individual servants [of God] for whom such [a thing] has [already] been facilitated. And for God, exalted be He, for every word there are [manifold] words, the sea will be spent before they are. How then can these [meanings] be restricted and enumerated? They constitute, rather, an exemplum for the people of taste and ecstasy which they follow when reciting the Qurʾān, so that what they have prepared themselves for, in the way of hidden elements of His knowledge, are revealed to them and what they have the capacity for [understanding], in the way of invisible elements of His Unseen, are disclosed to them. God is Guide of the striving ones (*mujāhada*) unto the path of unveiling and witnessing, and of the yearning ones unto the watering-places of the tasting (*dhawq*). Indeed, He is the proprietor of realisation (*taḥqīq*) and through His hand comes success.

### [1] al-Fātiḥa

[1:1] *In the Name of God*: the name of a thing is that by which it can be known. The Names of God, exalted be He, are the [arche]typal forms (*suwar nawʿiyya*) whose specificities and ipseities (*būwiyya*) indicate the attributes of God and His essence, and [which indicate] by their very existence His countenance, and by their individuation His oneness. For, these are the outward manifestations through which He can be known; *Allāh* is a name for the divine essence *qua* essence absolutely, without taking into consideration that it may be qualified by the attributes or indeed taking into consideration that it may not be [so] qualified; *the Compassionate*, is the one who causes existence and perfection to flow upon all [things] in the measure that [divine] wisdom requires and to the capacity of the receiving entities (*qawābil*) from the outset [of their creation]; *the Merciful*: (*al-Raḥīm*) is the one who bestows the spiritual perfection (*kamāl maʿnawī*) that has been earmarked for the human species in the end [sc. in the Hereafter]. It is for this reason that they say O [You Who are the] Compassionate One of this world and of the Hereafter (*yā raḥmān al-dunyā waʾl-āk̄bira*), but [say] O Merciful One of the Hereafter (*raḥīm al-āk̄bira*): the meaning then is, in the perfect human all-encompassing form, general and specific mercy, which is the locus of manifestation of the divine essence and the greatest truth with the totality of attributes, I commence and I recite. It [*Allāh*] is the Greatest Name [of God]. It is to this meaning that the Prophet's (*ṣl'm*) alluded when he said, 'I have been given the sum of all [excellent] speech [sc. The Qurʾān] and have been sent to complete the noble

character traits (*makārim al-akblāq*). For words constitute the realities (*ḥaqāʾiq*) of existents (*mawjūdāt*) and their concrete substances (*aʿyān*), just as Jesus, peace be upon him, was called a Word from God [cf. 3:39,45]. The noble character traits are the perfections [of these existents] and [represent] their specificities, constituting the sources of their [the existents'] actions in their entirety, contained as they are in the comprehensive human microcosm (*kawn insānī*). Herein lies a subtlety (*latīfa*), namely that the prophets, peace be upon them, have made the letters of the alphabet analogous to the ranks of existents (*marātib al-mawjūdāt*). I have found in the statements of Jesus, peace and blessings be upon him, and of the Commander of the Believers ʿAlī [b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, and of some Companions what indicates [the truth of] this. In effect, that is why they say that existents were made manifest through the [letter] *bāʾ* of *bismillāh* (In the Name of God), since it is the letter that comes after the *alif* which [itself] is analogous to the Essence of God. Thus it [the *bāʾ*] is an allusion to the First Intellect (*al-ʿaql al-awwal*), which is the first thing that God created and the one to whom God's statement, "I have not created anything more beloved to Me or more noble in My eyes than you: through you I grant, through you I seize, through you I reward and through you I chastise" is addressed [as per] the *ḥadīth*. [You will note that] the uttered letters in this statement are 18,<sup>7</sup> the written ones 19, and if the words were separated the letters would amount to 22. The 18 are allusions denoting the 18,000 worlds. For 'thousand' is a complete number subsuming all the other levels of numbers, and is as such the foundation of all [numerical] levels, higher than which there is no number. [The letters] thus are used to denote the mothers/foundations of all worlds (*ʿawālim*), namely, the world of power (*ʿālam al-jabarūt*), the world of the heavenly kingdom (*ʿālam al-malakūt*), the throne (*ʿarsh*), the seat (*kursī*), the seven heavens, the four elements and the three [natural] kingdoms (*mawālīd*),<sup>8</sup> each of which subdivides into its constituent parts; the 19 letters are allusions to these together with the world of humankind, for even if this [latter] belongs in the animal world, it, on account of its eminence (*sharaf*)<sup>9</sup> and its subsuming of both [the animal and the human] and its comprising of existence, it constitutes another world [in its own right], one with its own affair, a genus *sui generis*, with its own demonstrative proof (*burhān*), such as Gabriel from among the angels where God says, *and His angels... and Gabriel* [Q. 2:98].

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<sup>7</sup> The 18 pronounceable letters in this statement are *hamza, alif, ḥāʾ, yāʾ, bāʾ, wāw, kāf, ʿayn, dhāl, mīm, khāʾ, lām, qāf, tāʾ, rāʾ, nūn, ṭāʾ, thāʾ*.

<sup>8</sup> Literally, 'the three offspring': these are the mineral, the plant and the animal (including humans).

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Q. 17:70. According to Ibn ʿArabī, 'Man possesses an eminence over everything in the heaven and earth. He is God's sought-after goal among the existent things, since it is he whom God has taken as a locus of self-disclosure [...].' (Chittick 1989, 368).

The three hidden *alif*s, which complete the 22 [letters] upon separation, are an allusion to the true divine world in terms of the Essence, the attributes and the acts. These then are three worlds at the point of differentiation (*tafṣīl*), but one when at that of realisation (*taḥqīq*). The three written ones are an allusion to the manifestation of these worlds in the supreme human form. And on account of the veiling of the divine world when the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, was asked about the *alif* of the [letter] *bā'*, how was it that it went away, he replied, 'Satan stole it', and he was commanded to elongate the *bā'* of *bismillāh* to compensate for its [stolen] *alif*, an allusion to the veiling of the divineness of the divinity in the form of diffusional mercy (*rah̄ma intishāriyya*) and its manifestation in human form such that only those who are worthy will recognise it. That is why it [the *alif*] has not been written in. Indeed, in the *ḥadīth* it is said that God, exalted be He, created Adam in his form. Thus the [divine] Essence is veiled by the attributes, the attributes by the acts, the acts by the engendered things (*akwān*) and the effects of these engendered things (*āthār [kawniyya]*). The one to whom the acts are disclosed by the lifting of the veils of the engendered things, he trusts [in God]. The one to whom the attributes are disclosed by the lifting of the veils of the acts is satisfied and submits. The one to whom the Essence is disclosed by the unveiling of the veils of the attributes is annihilated in the Unity and becomes an absolute affirmer of the Unity absolutely, doing what he does and reciting what he recites 'in the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful'. The declaration of the unity of the acts then precedes the declaration of the unity of the attributes and this [the latter precedes] the declaration of the unity of the Essence. To these three he [the Prophet], may God's blessings be upon him, alluded when he would prostrate and say, 'I seek refuge in Your pardon from Your punishment, and I seek refuge in Your satisfaction from Your wrath and I seek refuge in You from You.'

[1:2] *Praise be to God; Lord of all Worlds*, to the end of the *sūra*: 'praise' in actions and utterances of the moment (*lisān al-ḥāl*) is the manifestation (*zubūr*) of perfections and the actualisation (*ḥuṣūl*) of the ends (*ghāyāt*) of things, since these are opening laudations and marvelous eulogies by the one granting them in accordance with what is due to that [object of eulogy]. For all existents, on account of their specificity and specific qualities and orientation towards their end-goals, and by the bringing forth of their perfections [sc. perfected states] from the space of potentiality into actuality, are proclaimers of [His] glory and praisers, as God, exalted be He, says: *and there is not a thing but proclaims His praise* [Q. 17:44]. Their proclamation of His glory is the declaration that He is above the need for any associate, [exalted above] the attributes of deficiency (*naqṣ*) and incapacity, [and this] by their very dependence on Him and their

being indicators of His Oneness and His power. As for their praise [of Him], this is the manifesting of their derivative perfections and their being the loci of the manifestation of those attributes of majesty and beauty. His Essence is singled out [for praise] on account of His being the principle (*mabdaʿ*) of all things, and [on account of] His preservation and management of these, which constitute the very signification of [His] lordship of all worlds. In other words [praise be] to every knowable of the knowledge of God [being that] by which He is known, as in the case of the seal and what it seals and the mould and what is moulded in it. The construction [of *ʿalam*] is in the sound plural [*ʿalamīn*] because it subsumes the signification of ‘knowledge’ (*ʿilm*), or on account of the prevalence [of cognizant beings in these worlds]. In the face of [His] bestowing of good generally and specifically, that is, outward graces such as health and provision, and inner [graces] such as gnosis (*maʿrifā*) and knowledge (*ʿilm*); and on account of His being the ultimate end [of all things], which is the [true] signification of [His being] master of [all] things on the Day of Judgement, since in reality the only one who will requite will be the worshipped One, to whom all mastership returns at the time of requital either through the rewarding of everlasting grace in place of ephemeral [grace] upon the disengagement from this [latter] by means of renunciation and the self-disclosures of actions upon the servant’s wrenching himself away from his actions and the replacement of his attributes with His attributes upon effacement (*maḥw*) and his subsistence (*baqāʿ*) through His Essence, and His gift to him of veridical [divine] existence (*wujūd ḥaqqānī*),<sup>10</sup> upon his annihilation (*fanāʿ*). To Him and His what-ness, exalted be He, pre-eternally and sempiternally, as befits Him in His Essence at the beginning stage and at the end stage and in-between the two at the stage of union (*maqām al-jamʿ*), belongs all praise by the differentiated tongues, absolutely. For He is the One praising and the One praised at [the level of] differentiation and [at the level of] union, the Worshipper and the Worshipped, whether at the starting point and or at the end. When He discloses Himself to His servants in His words through His attributes, they witness Him in His greatness and resplendence and in His perfect power and majesty, and they address Him in word and deed ascribing worship to Him [alone] and seeking assistance from Him [alone], for they find none to be worshipped other than Him and [find that] there is no might or power in anyone except through Him. If they stand present [at this witnessing] their motions and their stillness would all constitute worship of Him and through Him, and they would ‘maintain their

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<sup>10</sup> This is more than ‘real existence’ (*wujūd ḥaqqīqī*), for it refers to al-Ḥaqq Himself, in other words, existence within the (divine) existence of the Real.



prayers' [cf. Q. 70:23], supplicating with the tongue of love witnessing as they are His beauty from every aspect and in every aspect.

[1:6] *Guide us to the straight path*, in other words, fix us upon [the path of] guidance and empower us to remain upright along the path of oneness, that is, the path of those favoured [by You] with the special favour pertaining to [Your] Mercifulness (*rahīmiyya*), which is gnosis, love and guidance, such as the prophets, the martyrs, the truthful and the friends (*awliyā*<sup>3</sup>) who have witnessed Him as the First and the Last, and as the Manifest and the Hidden, and who through the witnessing of the rise of His abiding countenance, became absent from the existence of ephemeral shadow.

[1:7] *not [the path] of those against whom there is wrath*, those who stop at the outward [aspects], concealing themselves behind the veil of the Compassionate One's favour and that of corporeal bliss and physical taste, [stopping] short of the spiritual realities and the bliss of the heart and the tasting through the intellect, such as the Jews. For their call was one to outward things, such as the Gardens, the [paradisiacal] maidens and palaces, which is why He was wrathful with them, for wrath requires banishment and distance. To [be content to] stop at the outward aspects [of things], which are the veils of darkness, is the ultimate in distance [from God]; nor of those who are astray, those who stand [content] with the inner aspects, which are the luminous veils (*bujub nūrāniyya*), and have concealed themselves behind the favour pertaining to [His] Mercifulness to the exclusion of the favour emanating from [Him as] the Compassionate One. They are unmindful of the manifest nature of the Truth and have erred from the even path, and have thus been denied the witnessing of the beauty of the Beloved in all things, as is the case with the Christians. For their call was to inner things and to the lights of the world of the Holy, whereas the call of the Muhammadans, the proclaimers of [God's] oneness, was to both [the inner and the outer] aspects, combining love for the beauty of [His] Essence with [love of His] most beautiful attributes as attested [in the Qur'ān]: *hasten to forgiveness from your Lord and a Garden...; be wary of God and believe in His Messenger and He will give you two portions from His mercy and He will make for you a light by which you may walk; worship God and do not associate anything with Him*. They [the Muslims] thus heeded all three calls, as is mentioned in support of: *they hope for His mercy but fear His chastisement, and they say, 'O our Lord, complete for us our light; they say our lord is God and then are upright and are thus rewarded with union, according to what God, exalted be He, has informed: their reward with their Lord shall be gardens of Eden. They will have their wage and their light; whithersoever they turn, there is the face of God; for those who have been virtuous, theirs shall be the fairest reward and more* [Q. 10:26].

### *Sūrat al-Baqara*

[2:1-2] *Alif lām mīm. That Book*: these three letters constitute an allusion to the entirety of existence *qua* totality, because *alif* alludes to the essence of the one who is the first of existence, as has been mentioned; *lām* [alludes] to the active intellect, called Gabriel, who is the middle of existence receiving emanation from the principle [of existence] and overflowing upon the end [of existence]; *mīm* [alludes] to Muḥammad who is the last of existence with whom the cycle [of existence] comes full circle and [its last] is joined to its first, which is why he [Muḥammad] is the seal. He said, 'Verily time has come full circle back to its form on the day when God created the heavens and the earth'. According to one of the [pious] predecessors, 'The *lām* is made up of two *alifs*', in other words, analogous to the Essence together with its attribute of knowledge, which together constitute two of the three divine realms we have alluded to. It is thus one of God's Names, for each Name is made up of the Essence together with some [particular] attribute. As for *mīm*, this is an allusion to the Essence together with all of the attributes and the acts that have been veiled therein in the Muḥammadan form, which is God's Greatest Name, so that none knows this [Name] except the one who knows it. Do you not know how *mīm*, which is the form of the Essence, is veiled by It? *Mīm* has a *yā'* and the *yā'* has an *alif*. The mysterious aspect of the letters of the alphabet is that there is no letter that does not contain an *alif*. This [explanation] is similar to the statement that the meaning [of these letters] constitutes an oath by God, the Knowing, the Wise. For Gabriel is the locus of manifestation of knowledge and is thus His Name the Knowing, while Muḥammad is the locus of manifestation of wisdom and is thus His Name the Wise. From this becomes manifest the meaning of the statement, 'In every one of His Names there are an infinite number of names. In the realm of wisdom, which is the realm of cause and effect, knowledge is not complete and is not perfected unless it is combined with the act whereupon it becomes a wisdom. Therefore submission [to God] (*islām*) does not result simply by saying 'there is no god except God', unless it is combined with 'Muḥammad is the Messenger of God'. The meaning of this verse then is: *alif lām mīm*, that promised Book, in other words, the form of the all-comprehensive totality [of existence], suggested by the book of number mysticism (*jafr*), that subsumes everything promised to be with the Mahdī at the end of time.<sup>11</sup> Only he will be able to read it as it really is. The [book of] number mysticism is the Tablet of Decree (*lawḥ al-qadā'*), which is the universal intellect ('*aql al-kull*'), while the all-comprehensive is the Tablet of Determination (*lawḥ al-qadar*), which is the

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<sup>11</sup> This is one instance in which Kāshānī's Shī'ism can be gleaned, since he refers to *jafr* and the coming of the messianic figure of the *mahdī* ...[expand].

universal soul (*nafs al-kull*). The meaning then of the book of number mysticism and the all-comprehensive [totality] that contain everything that has been and that will be is like your saying *sūrat al-Baqara* and *sūrat al-Naml*.

[2:2] [*That Book*] in it there is no doubt, upon verification of its truth. The implied sense of this statement is: by the Truth that is the totality *qua* totality because it is the clarification of that book whose coming the tongues of prophets and their scriptures have promised, as Jesus, peace be upon him, said: 'We bring you the revelation. But as for the interpretation, the Mahdī will bring it at the end of time'. The apodosis of the oath is omitted because it is indicated by that book, just as it is omitted in several instances in the Qur'ān such as *by the sun* [Q. 91:1] and *by those that wrest violently* [Q. 79:1] and others. In other words [there is no doubt that] We shall indeed reveal that book promised in the Torah and the Gospel and it will be with Muḥammad, omitted because it is indicated by His words *that Book*. In other words, 'that Book made known in the preceding knowledge promised in the Torah and the Gospel is the truth such that there can be no doubt concerning it'.

*A guidance for those who guard themselves*, that is, guidance in itself for those who guard against depravities and the veils that prevent acceptance of the truth in it. Know that people in terms of [their status at] the end will be of seven kinds, for they are either fortunate or wretched. God says, *some of them will be wretched, and [some] fortunate* [Q. 11:105]. The wretched ones will be 'those of the left [hand]', while the fortunate ones will either be 'those of the right [hand]' or 'those foremost, the ones brought near' [cf. Q. 56:8-11]. God says, *and you will be three kinds...*[to the end of] the verse [Q. 56:7]. As for those of the left [hand], they will either be the banished ones 'for whom the Word has proved true', and these are the people of the darkness and the universal veil that has been sealed upon their hearts from pre-eternity, as God says: *and We have indeed urged unto Hell many of the jinn and mankind...*[to the end of] the verse [Q. 7:179]. In the *ḥadīth* of the Lord: "These I have created for the Fire and I am not concerned for them'. As for the hypocrites who had been prepared originally, receptive of illumination in accordance with [their] innate disposition (*fiṭra*) and the [first] creation [cf. Q. 56:62]; but their hearts have been veiled by the engulfing [cf. 83:14] that has been acquired by [their] acquisition of vices and the committing of acts of disobedience and the pursuit of bestial and predatorial acts, as well as [their] engaging in devilish plots, such that these corrupt miens and dark traits have become deep-rooted in their souls and have piled up upon their inner-hearts so that they are full of doubt, perplexed, wandering lost, their works have failed [cf. Q. 2:217] and their heads hang low [cf. Q. 32:12]. They will suffer a more severe chastisement and their state will be worse than the former group because of the incompatibility between the grip of their

[original] preparedness and their [subsequent corrupted] state; both of these groups are the people of this world. As for those of the right [hand], they are either: the people of bounty and reward who have believed and performed righteous deeds for the sake of [attaining] Paradise, hoping for it and satisfied with it, and who ‘find all that they did present’ [cf. Q. 18:49] commensurate with their varying degrees [of merit]: *all shall have degrees [of requital] according to what they have done* [Q. 6:132]. Among these [last] are the people of mercy who remain upon the security of their souls and the purity of their hearts, who will take up their degrees of Paradise in accordance with their [individual] preparedness through the bounty of their Lord, not on account of their perfections as legacy of their works. Or they [those of the right hand] are the people of pardon, who have ‘mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad’ [cf. Q. 9:102], and these [people] are [also] divided into two groups:

1) those who are immediately pardoned on account of the strength of their belief and that their bad deeds are not deeply rooted, because they did not engage in them often, and as a consequence of their repentance of these [deeds]: *for such God will replace their evil deeds with good deeds* [Q. 25:70];

2) those who will be chastised for a time commensurate with the extent to which acts of disobedience have become entrenched in them, until they are rid of the filth that they have earned and are saved, being the people of [God’s] justice and requital: *and those among these who have transgressed shall also be smitten by the evils of what they have earned* [Q. 39:51]. But the [divine] mercy shall overtake them.

All three [of these groups] are the people of the Hereafter. As for the foremost (*sābiqūn*), they are either the lovers (*muḥibbūn*) or the beloved (*maḥbūbūn*). The loving are those who have struggled in the way of God a struggle worthy of Him [cf. Q. 22:78] and have turned penitently to Him a turning worthy of Him and whom He then guides to His ways. The beloved are the people of [His] pre-eternal providence whom He has elected and guided to a straight path. Both types are the people of God. The Qurʾān thus is not a guide for the first group from among the wretched because of their refraining from receiving guidance on account of their non-preparedness; nor [is it a guide] for the second group because of the disappearance of their preparedness, and their transfiguration (*maskh*) and their total obliteration (*tams*) in their corrupt beliefs. These then are the people who will abide in the Fire, except what God wills. It [the Qurʾān] thus remains a guide for the other five [groups] subsumed by ‘the God-fearing’.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> This refers to verse 2, above, *al-muttaqūn*, the God-fearing. The rendering of the term as ‘those who guard themselves’, above, is necessitated by Kāshānī’s explanatory gloss and the flexibility of the Arabic.

The beloved needs the guidance of the Book after his [initial] attraction (*jadhb*) and his arrival at the wayfaring to God on account of His saying to His beloved [Muḥammad]: *Thus [it is] that We may strengthen your inner-heart with it* [Q. 25:32]; and His saying [to him]: *And all that We relate to you of the accounts of the messengers that with which We might strengthen your inner-heart* [Q. 11:120].

The lover, however, needs this [guidance] before the arrival and the attraction and afterwards in order to wayfare to God and in God. Therefore, the ‘God-fearing’ [mentioned] in this instance are the ones who are prepared, those who have remained upon their original innate disposition and have avoided the [heart-]engulfing idolatry and doubt because of the purity of their hearts and the integrity of their souls and the endurance of their primordial light, and have thus not broken God’s covenant. Such fear of God (*taqwā*) precedes faith (*īmān*) but [also] contains other stages that come after it, as will be mentioned, if God wills.

[2:3] *[those] who believe in the Unseen, and maintain the prayer*: that is, [they believe] in what is absent to them in terms of the faith of following authority (*taqlīdī*), or that [faith] of the verification of knowledge. For faith is in two parts, that of following authority and that of verification. That of verification is [itself] divided into two, [verification] by reasoning (*istidlāl*) or by unveiling (*kashfī*), both of which [are] either [of the type that] stand at the limit of knowledge and of the unseen, or [of the type that] do not stand there. The former is to know [something] for certain, what is called the knowledge of certainty (*‘ilm al-yaqīn*); the second is either of the eye, namely, the witnessing (*mushāhada*) called the eye of certainty (*‘ayn al-yaqīn*), or of the reality, namely, the vision of self-disclosure, called the reality of certainty (*ḥaqq al-yaqīn*). The last two types do not belong to [the category of] belief in the Unseen. For belief in the Unseen requires works of the heart, namely, [self-]purification (*tazkiya*), which is the purification of the heart against becoming inclined to the exterior bodily fortunes that distract [one] from attaining abiding happiness. For happiness is of three kinds: that of the heart, that of the body and that which surrounds it. That [happiness] of the heart consists of gnostic sciences (*ma‘ārif*) and wisdoms, perfections of knowledge and practical perfections of character. As for [the happiness of] the body, this consists of physical well-being and strength, corporeal pleasures and natural passions. As for that [happiness] which surrounds [the body], this consists of wealth and means, just as the commander of the believers [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him: ‘Verily, ample wealth is a grace, but more excellent than ample wealth is the well-being of the body and a God-mindful heart’. It is necessary to guard against [concerning oneself with] these former two in order to obtain this desired last by means of renunciation and worship. For to perform prayers is to abandon the comforts of the body and to tire the

physical limbs, [prayer] being the mother of all [acts of] worship which when it is forthcoming the remainder follow, *truly prayer prohibits lewd acts and indecency* [Q. 45:29], since it is a burden and a great hardship upon both body and soul; while to expend of [one's] wealth [in charity] is to turn away from outward happiness beloved to the soul, what is called renunciation (*zuhd*). Indeed, [such] expenditure may be harder upon it than the expending of one's spirit because of the hold that niggardliness exercises upon it. He [God] is not content with the [minimum] obligatory amount [of charity] and thus says:

[2:3] *and of what We have provided them expend*, so that the heart might become accustomed to forsaking any excess wealth through [acts of] generosity and munificence and the expending of wealth in voluntary ways by means of virtuous acts, gifts and charity, saving himself thereby from the avarice of his own soul [cf. Q. 59:9]. [Here] 'expending' is specifically qualified as [required] 'partially' through the partitive [particle] *min* ('of') lest that person should fall into the vice of squandering by expending the [entire] necessary amount and be deprived of the merit of [acts of] generosity which is one of the ways of assuming the character traits of God;

[2:4] *and who believe in what has been revealed to you; and what was revealed before you*, that is to say, the faith of verification that comprehends the three divisions [of faith], required for the works of the heart which constitute the adornment (*tabliya*) and that is when the heart acquires perspicacity through the wisdoms and gnostic sciences revealed in the divine scriptures and [through] knowledge concerning the states [of creatures] in the final return (*ma'ād*) and the matters of the Hereafter and the realities of holy knowledge, which is why He says: *and of the Hereafter, they are certain*. The people of the Hereafter are the ones who have not traversed the limit of purification and have not arrived at the [stage of] adornment which is the legacy (*mīrāth*) of that [traverse], on the basis of his [the imam 'Alī's] saying, peace be upon him: 'Whoso acts in accordance with what he has been taught, God grants (*warratha*)<sup>13</sup> him the knowledge of what he knows not'. The people of God, those of certainty, who comprehend [that legacy], they are all upon guidance from their Lord, [being] either [guided] to Him, or to His abode, the abode of safety (*salāma*), merit, reward and gentleness (*luṭf*): these are none other than the people of prosperity (*falāḥ*), [prosperous] by [having escaped] punishment or veiling, which is why He says

[2:5] *Those*, namely, the ones enjoying the above-mentioned attributes relating to purification and adornment, *are upon guidance from their Lord; those are the ones that*

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<sup>13</sup> The use of the verb here is intended to echo the 'legacy' of that stage beyond purification.

*will prosper*, because of these [attributes]. Thus *alladhīna yu'minūna* ('who believe') is the subject, the second *alladhīna yu'minūna* is coordinated to it and *ūlā'ika* ('those are the ones') constitutes the predicate; but if it were construed as an adjectival qualification (*sifa*) of *al-muttaqīn* ('the God-fearing') [of verse 2], then what is meant is that they are the ones whose God-consciousness after the guidance [given to them] is perfect; this is [grammatically] feasible on the basis of [the feasibility] of referring to a thing by that to which it is about to allude.

[2:6] [From] *As for the disbelievers*, to where He says *mighty* [*alike it is for them whether you have warned them or have not warned them, they do not believe*].

[2:7] *God has set a seal on their hearts, and on their hearing; and on their eyes is a covering; and for them there will be a mighty chastisement*, [all of this] refers to the foremost group of the wretched ones who are subject to the overwhelming divine power (*qabr ilāhī*) for whom no warning is of any use and who have no means to being saved from the Fire: 'those are the ones against whom the word of your Lord was fulfilled: that they shall not believe' [cf. Q. 10:33] *and thus was the word of your Lord fulfilled against those who disbelieve: that they shall be the inhabitants of the Fire* [Q. 40:6] all paths shall be closed to them and the gates [of hell] shall be sealed shut upon them. For the heart is the divine waymark of the senses, the locus of inspiration from which they are veiled by its [the heart's] being sealed; while the hearing and the sight are the human waymarks of the senses, the pure ones which constitute the two gates of understanding and the capacity to take heed. These [wretched ones] are thus denied the use of these two [waymarks] because meaning is unable to penetrate from them into the heart. Thus they have no access inwardly to the unveiling knowledge of experiential taste, nor outwardly to taught and acquired knowledge and so they are interned in the prisons of darkness: how mighty therefore is their chastisement!

[2:8] *And some people there are who say, 'We believe*, these being the second group of the wretched who are deprived of [true] belief even as they claim [to have] it when they say 'we believe' *in God*, because the locus of belief is the heart and not the tongue: [as in the case of where] *the bedouins say, 'We believe'. Say: 'You do not believe; but rather say, "We have submitted", for faith has not yet entered into your hearts* [Q. 49:14]. The meaning of their statement 'we believe in God *and [in] the Last Day*', is that they are claiming possession of the two [branches of] knowledge, that of God's oneness and that of the final return (*ma'ād*), both of which constitute the principles of religion and its foundation. In other words, [they are saying] 'we are not like the polytheists who are veiled from the Truth nor like the People of the Scripture who are barred from [true knowledge of] religion and the final return – for, the teachings of the People of the

Scripture concerning the final return does not accord with the truth. Know that to disbelieve is to be veiled and where one is veiled from the truth, as in the case of the polytheists, or from religion, as in the case of the People of the Scripture; and the one who is veiled from the truth is necessarily veiled from religion the very means by which one arrives at the truth. But the one who is veiled from religion may not necessarily be veiled from the truth. These, however, claim to be free of both veils at once. Thus they are shown to be liars by having their selves deprived of faith. In other words, so long as they are such they cannot be believers; [*but they are not believers.*]

[2:9] [*They would deceive God and the believers; and only themselves they deceive; and they are not aware.*] Deception (*mukhāda'a*) is the act of deceit from two parties. It is to manifest good [intentions] while concealing evil [ones]. To deceive God is to deceive His Messenger, on account of God's saying *whoever obeys the Messenger, verily obeys God* [Q. 4:80] and His saying *and you threw not when you threw but God threw* [Q. 8:17]; and because he [the Prophet] is His beloved. A *ḥadīth* has it that: 'And My servant does not cease to approach me through supererogatory acts until I love him. And when I love him, I become his hearing with which he hears and his sight with which he sees and his tongue with which he speaks and his hand with which he strikes and his foot with which he walks'.<sup>14</sup>

Their deceit of God and the believers is their outward display of belief and love while concealing disbelief and enmity; while God's and the believers' deception of these [aforementioned] is keeping the peace [with them] and applying the rules of Islam in their case by deeming their blood illicit and giving protection to their possessions and otherwise, while what lies in store for them is a painful chastisement, an evil end and a terrible outcome, as well as their degradation in this world on account of their being exposed by God's informing them [the believers, of this reality] and the revelation about their status. However, the difference between the two acts of deception is that theirs [the disbelievers'] only succeeds in destroying their souls, filling them with anguish, leaving them with nothing but the evil consequence of their deeds and punishment, multiplying for them the darkness, disbelief and hypocrisy and bringing together the reasons for the perishing, banishment and wretchedness of these [souls]; whereas, [their] being deceived by God affects to the ultimate degree and brings them the most severe destruction, as where God says *And they schemed, and God schemed, and God is the*

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen Hirtenstein and Martin Notcutt. *Divine Sayings: 101 Hadith Qudsi: the Mishkāt al-Anwār of Muḥyiddīn Ibn 'Arabī* (Oxford: Anqa Publishing, 2004), 'Eleventh Hadith (91)', 70.



*best of schemers* [Q. 3:54]. As a result of being extremely engrossed in this ignorance of theirs, they do not sense this manifest matter [at all].

[2:10] *In their hearts is a sickness*, in other words, doubt and hypocrisy. The use of the indefinite form of *marad* (sickness) and the adverbial clause is an indication of the fact that [such a] sickness has befallen them and has established itself and taken root in these [hearts of theirs, as we have mentioned in the above structure, for otherwise He would have said: 'Their hearts are sick or [that they are] dead'; *and God has increased them in sickness*, that is, [with] another [sickness]: [God increases their] spite, envy and rancour by exalting the word of religion and the granting of assistance to the Messenger and the believers. All despicable acts are sicknesses of the heart as they are cause of its weakening and the evil of its private actions and its ruin in the final issue. He distinguishes between the two chastisements by [stipulating] pain for the hypocrites and an awesome [chastisement] for disbelievers, because the chastisement for those who have been banished from pre-eternity is greater. Thus they do not experience the intensity of its painfulness because of the impurity of their hearts' perception, similar to the state of a dead or hemiplegic or numbed limb [that senses nothing] when it undergoes severing or cauterisation and other kinds of pain. As for the hypocrites, they sense the extreme pain because of their established preparedness [for belief] at the outset and the permanence of their [faculties of] perception. Inevitably then their chastisement is painful, caused as it is by the chronic sickness that occurs [in their hearts], namely, mendacity and its [evil] concomitants.

*and there awaits them a painful chastisement because they used to lie.*

[2:11] *When it is said to them, 'Do not work corruption on earth', they say, 'We are only putting things right'.*

[2:12] *Truly, they are the agents of corruption, but they perceive not.*

[2:13] *When it is said to them, 'Believe as the people believe', they say, 'Shall we believe as fools believe?' Truly, they are the foolish ones, but they know not.*

And when they are warned against working corruption on earth, that is, towards the nether aspect, which is that of the souls and their relevant welfare, [corruption] in the way of the sullyng of the souls, the incitement of evil, wars, enmity and hatred between people, they deny [all of this] and go to the utmost extreme to prove that they are putting things right for what concerns their souls. For they see that the welfare [of the souls] lies in the acquisition of livelihood and the means to make such [a livelihood] forthcoming, as well as in the organisation of [one's] this-worldly affairs specifically for the sake of their souls, absorbed as they are by the love of this world and ensconced as

they are in the pleasures of the flesh, veiling themselves with what is [only] partially beneficial and finding in the senses sanctuary from comprehensive and all-encompassing benefits and [from] the pleasures of the intellect. It is in this way that their wants are facilitated and their demands are made forthcoming, all the while unaware of their acts of corruption that can be perceived through the senses. When they are summoned to true faith, such as that of the poor among the Muslims and the destitute who are stripped of everything, they deem them fools [cf. Q. 2:13] for their abandoning of the vanities of this world and their rejection of its enjoyments, pleasures and good things given the sincerity of their renunciation [of such things]. Their ultimate concerns and the utmost sought by their intellects, [intellects that are] captive in the shackles of desire and tarnished by delusions, it is these very pleasures that lead to their demise: *They know [merely] an outward aspect of the life of this world, but they, of the Hereafter, they are oblivious* [Q. 30:7]. They are unaware that the ultimate in folly is to choose what is transient and despicable over the remainder that is more noble. The reason for one verse ending with [reference to] perception, while the other with [lack of] knowledge, is that the effect of their deception on their souls and of their working of corruption on earth is as clear as something that is perceptible to the senses. As for the preponderance given to the bliss of the Hereafter over the bliss of this world, which is required to distinguish between folly and wisdom, that is something that can be deduced purely by reason.

[2:14] *When they meet those who believe*: a literal quotation of their hypocrisy that is a concomitant of the presence of two [kinds of] preparedness within them, a primordial luminous one that is weak, vanquished and close to being extinguished, and by which they correspond to the believers; and an acquired dark one that is strong and vanquishing by which they are in harmony with the disbelievers. For if they did not possess a minimum of light they would not be able to mix with and befriend believers in the first place as is the case with others like the disbelievers, because of the self-evident mutual incompatibility between light and darkness in all aspects. [The word] *shayṭān* is constructed to the paradigm *faṣṣal* from [the infinitive] *al-shuṭūn* which means 'to go far away', their devils being profoundly removed [from the divine], banished, while their leaders have attained the utmost degree of hypocrisy. Their mocking of the believers is proof of the weakness of the light aspect within them and the strength of the dark aspect, for the one who belittles something is one for whom that thing is slight, of little weight or worth. Thus they belittle those luminous individuals because of the littleness of light within them, since it is [only] by light that the value of light

can be known. Given the preponderance of darkness within them, they resort to the disbelievers and become friendly with them.

*[they say, 'We believe'; but when they go apart to their devils they say, 'We are with you; we were only mocking'.]*

[2:15] *God [Himself] mocks them*, that is, He belittles them because from the aspect in which they find themselves their relationship to the Divine Presence is slight and weak, and so in the same measure that the Divine aspect is diminished in them, they become more firmly attached to their souls, whereas for the believers the more that their ego-centric (*naḥṣānī*) make-up is diminished the more that they find themselves by God's side: what a difference between the two [states]! *reinforcing them*, in their bestial and predatorial darkneses, which are satanic and ego-centric attributes, by setting up [for them] the substrata and causes [of these resultant attributes], namely their passions, sensual delights, property and livelihood in this world, all of which they have chosen on account of their caprice in their state of bewilderment, *in their insolence, bewildered (ya'mahūn)*: 'amah is blindness of the heart, while their insolence is their transgressing of the [divinely stipulated] limit which they are supposed to respect. That limit is the breast (*ṣadr*), that is, the aspect of the heart that is adjacent to the soul (*naḥṣ*), whereas the inner heart (*fu'ād*) is that aspect [of the heart] that is adjacent to the spirit (*rūḥ*), and so it sits in the middle [between the two] with aspects towards both of these: to adhere to that limit is to worship by [adhering to] the commands of God, exalted be He, and [to] His prohibitions, simultaneously turning to Him in order to seek illumination so that this aspect may be illumined and thereby the soul is illuminated. To adhere to the other limit is to receive gnosis, sciences, realities, wisdoms and divine prescriptions so that these might become etched upon the breast and the soul be adorned thereby. Insolence is to be engrossed in the ego-centric, bestial, predatorial and satanic attributes that overcome the heart, blackening it and blinding it, and sullyng the spirit [as a result].

[2:16] *Those are they who have bought in exchange for guidance error*, that is, darkness and being veiled from the path of truth, namely, religion, or from the truth [itself], for error is dispersed in the face of guidance through the original light of preparedness; *so their commerce brings no profit [for them]*, because their capital derives from the world of light and subsistence so that they might acquire by this [capital] what resembles it in the way of effusive, perfecting light through the sciences, deeds, wisdoms, gnosis, character traits and virtuous dispositions becoming thereby rich in reality, deserving of proximity, dignity, exaltation and esteem before God, but they have not profited by acquiring [all of] that; *[nor are they guided]* and thus the original guidance that had

been their commodity and capital is lost by the disappearance of their preparedness and the sullyng of their hearts by the rust that necessarily leads to eternal veiling and deprivation and so their loss is an eternal one without beginning or end.

[2:17] *Their likeness*, that is, to describe them in terms of their hypocrisy is like describing the one seeking to kindle [a fire] and the resultant light which no sooner than it illumines things nearby around him his fire subsides, leaving him bewildered. For the light of their preparedness can be compared to a kindled fire and its illumining of things around them is their being guided to what is in their best interest in terms of their livelihood in the here and now, as opposed to what is in their best interest in terms of the final return that is [seemingly] far away for them, and [their being guided to] companionship of the believers and being in accord with them outwardly; its [his fire's] being extinguished swiftly is the dying out of their light of preparedness and the rapid evanescence of what they had been content with of their world and its imminent termination; [*is as the likeness of one who kindled a fire, and when it illumined all about him*]

*God took away their light*, of preparedness by reinforcing them in insolence, leaving them veiled from success, in the darkneses of the soul's attributes [*and left them in darkness*]; *unable to see*, with the eye of the heart the way out, nor what might benefit them in the way of spiritual knowledge, like the one whose fire is extinguished while he is wandering about between his work and his means of subsistence;

[2:18] *deaf, dumb, blind*, in reality because of their hearts being veiled from the light of the intellect by which they hear the truth, utter it and see it. Outwardly, because of their not being beneficial, given that the paths from those sense to the heart are blocked and given the locus of the veil, the light of the heart does not reach them so that they might have preserved their benefits; nor do its perceptions touch the heart so that they might understand and take heed; *they shall not return*, to God because of the two barriers set upon their hearts, [the two barriers] mentioned in His statement *and We have set before them a barrier and behind them a barrier* [Q. 36:9]. The use of the simile lies in depicting what is intellectual in tangible form that it might find visible expression in the souls of the common folk. He then likens them to a people who are struck by rain amidst darkness, thunder and lightning: rain is the descent of the divine revelation and the arrival of [divine] mercy as assistance to them through the blessedness of the companionship of the believers and the remainder of their preparedness that might benefit their hearts even minimally; and [the rain] is also the materialisation for them of outward graces consistent with their wishes outwardly. The darkneses are the ego-centric attributes and the imaginal and illusory doubts and the

satanic whisperings that bewilder them and fill them with anxiety. Thunder is the divine fulmination and the overwhelmingly powerful threat [of chastisement] mentioned in the Qurʾān, its verses and the aurally and visually received reports, that which frightens them and results in the smallest breaking of their insolent hearts and a defeat of their rejecting souls. Lightning is the luminous flashes and the spiritual alerts upon hearing the promise [of reward] and being reminded of the favours and blessings that which entices them and gives them hope [of salvation] and thus profits them with a small yearning and sways them to [hope for] the granting [of their supplications].

[2:19] *Or as a cloudburst out of the heaven in which is darkness, and thunder, and lightning —*

The meaning of *they put their fingers in their ears against the thunderclaps, cautious of death*: they are distracted from understanding by diversions and play and from listening to the verses that mention the threat [of chastisement], lest this succeeds [in admonishing them] by severing them from the pleasures of the natural world and [preoccupying them] with the burdensome thoughts about the Hereafter. For to desist from the pleasures of the senses is for them to die. But God is all-powerful against them and will cut them off from those pleasures to which they have become accustomed by means of natural death, the power of One who encompasses a thing so that nothing of it can escape Him [*and God encompasses the disbelievers*].

Yet their caution is of no avail [to them].

[2:20] *The lightning*, namely, the luminous flash, *well-nigh snatches away their sight*, that is, their intellects veiled as they are by slumber from the light of guidance and unveiling, for the intellect is the eye of the heart; *whenever it gives them light, they walk in it*, that is, they rise [in status] and come closer to accepting the truth and guidance; *and when the darkness is over them, they stop*, that is, they remain fixed in their [state of] bewilderment in that darkness of theirs; *had God willed, He would have taken away their hearing and their sight*, He would have obliterated their understanding and intellect and effaced the light of their preparedness as in the case of the former group, and so they are not even affected upon hearing the revelation in the first place. *Truly, God has power over all things*, [be it] an externally existent thing, necessary or contingent, as well as a mentally existent thing, contingent or impossible. For a non-thing is purely a non-existent, neither in the mind nor externally [sc. in the created universe]; but His power specifically relates to that which is contingent and not to what is necessary or what is impossible, this [is clear] by rational proof. This concludes the discussion of the seven categories in undifferentiated form and a separation between the two groups of wretched ones. The mention of the first group is brief and kept to a

minimum because discussion of them is of no use and is fully gleaned from the mention of the second group. Thus the criticism, reviling and censure entailed in the depiction of their status, as well as their being threatened and promised punishment and the condemnation of their conduct and their habits is on account of the possibility of their accepting guidance and the disappearance of the sickness that afflicts them and the kindling of the light of their innate dispositions by the aid of the divine granting of success, that perhaps such rebuke might break the strength of their obstinacy and that such scolding might extirpate the roots of their despicable acts so that their inner aspects might then be purified, their hearts illumined by the light of the will whereafter they follow the path of truth. Perhaps their friendly and gentle attitude towards the believers and their keeping company with them might incline them towards their [the believers'] good nature awakening some love and desire within them by which their hearts then soften to the remembrance of God [cf. Q. 39:23] and their souls become obedient to the commands of God, repenting thereafter and making amends, just as God, exalted be He, says: *Verily the hypocrites will be in the lowest level of the Fire and you will never find a helper for them, save those who repent and make amends and hold fast to God and make their religion purely God's; those are with the believers and God will certainly give the believers a great wage* [Q. 4:145-6].

[2:21] *O people [worship your Lord Who created you and those that were before you, so that you may be fearful]*, having concluded His mention of the fortunate and the damned, He calls them to [declaration of] the Oneness of God. The first stage of [declaring] the Oneness of God, is to declare the unity of [His] acts, which is why servanthood is tied to lordship, that they might feel the intimacy when they see the graces [given to them] and love Him, like when He said: 'I made creatures and sought their love through the graces [that I grant them]'. They then thank Him for these, for worship is gratitude and is only forthcoming in return for graces. He singles out His lordship for them so that they might single out their worship for Him. He seeks to lift the first of the three veils which are the veils of the acts, the attributes and [the veil of His] essence by means of the presentation of the self-disclosure of the acts because creatures in terms of the three [veils] are all, as engendered things, veiled from the truth absolutely. Thus the origin of their configuration (*inshā'*) and the configuration of their existence is dependent upon in terms of principles, causes and conditions, is the same as that of their mothers and fathers before them.

[2:22] [*He Who assigned to you the earth for a couch and heaven for an edifice; and sent down from the heaven water, wherewith He brought forth fruits for your provision*] He has assigned the earth to them for a couch so that it might be their resting place and

their domicile, and He has assigned [to them] the heaven for an edifice so that it might shelter them, and He has sent down water from the heaven and therewith brought forth plants from the earth so that this might be provision for them [drawing them thereby] to Himself, that they might beware of attributing the act to other than Him and thus rise above associating acts [with any other than Him] when they witness that these are all from God. That is why He mentions what results from these antecedent [graces] using [the coordinating particle] *fā'*, saying: *so set not up compeers to God, while you know*, what we have mentioned in the way of things given, as though He were saying that He was the one who has performed these acts and so worship can only be truly for Him and should not be assigned to any other than Him. Do not therefore set up a compeer to Him by attributing the act to this [compeer] that this [latter] would then deserve to be worshipped by you and that you then worship this [compeer] even as you are aware of [the transgression involved in] that. Their worship should only be for the Maker. Their Lord is the one who discloses Himself in the form of maker, since every servant only worships what he knows and he can only know God in the measure that he finds divinity in himself. They can only find the Doer, freely chosen [by them] and so they worship Him. The ultimate goal of such worship is to arrive at Paradise, which is the perfection of the world of acts. God has made smooth the earths of their souls and constructed upon them the heavens of their spirits, sending down from these heavens the water of the science of declaring the unity of [His] acts, therewith bringing forth from that earth the plants of submission as well as works, acts of obedience, and virtuous character traits so that from these He might provide for their hearts the fruits of certainty, as well as the states and the stations such as patience, gratitude and reliance. Having established [His] Oneness, this is used as proof to establish the prophethood [of Muḥammad] so that [one's] *islām* becomes sound thereby, since it cannot be sound except through the two testimonies. For merely declaring [God's] Oneness is to become veiled from the level of differentiation by the union which is pure compulsion that leads to heresy and indifference [to the Law], while mere attribution of the act and the saying to the Messenger is to be veiled by the level of differentiation from the union, that which is pure destiny that leads to magianism and dualism, whereas *islām* is a path between the two combining our words 'there is no god but God' and our words 'Muḥammad is the Messenger of God' and belief in it as a locus of [divine] self-manifestation for His acts, exalted be He. For the acts of creatures compared to the acts of the Truth are as the body to the spirit. Just as the source of the act is the spirit but cannot be completed except by the body, so too the Originator of the act is [God] the Truth and cannot become manifest through creatures. The mission [of Muḥammad] is necessary because creatures by virtue of their being veiled

and distant from the Truth are unable to receive gnosis from their Lord [without it]. There must necessarily be an intermediary who through his Truth-witnessing spirit is in harmony with the Divine Presence and through his creature-familiar soul [is in harmony] with the rank of humankind, so that his heart is able to receive from his spirit lordly words which he casts unto his holy soul so that creatures accept [these] from him on account of the harmonised link [to both the divine and the human]. Thus He says:

[2:23] *And if you are in doubt concerning what We have revealed*, that is, [doubt concerning] Our revelation to Muḥammad and thus doubt the truthfulness of his prophethood, then weigh up your human forces and summon your analogy-strong minds, veiled [as they are] from the light of guidance, and your thoughts, skilful [as they are] in putting together speech and arranging meanings, being as you are of your own, children of your species: would you be able to produce a *sūra*, that is, a segment of speech like it? [*to Our servant, then bring a sūra like it; and call your witnesses besides God*] *if you are truthful*, in attributing it to Muḥammad.

[2:24] *And if you do not*, then be pliant, submit, believe and abandon obstinacy that will eventually lead you to the Fire. The requisite, that is either faith or submission, has been omitted, while the concomitant, which is to guard against the Fire, has replaced it, so that the proof that denial necessarily leads to entering the Fire and the eventuality of chastisement for them is stronger. As for His saying *and you will not*, is a parenthetical statement informing [them] of the unseen in the knowledge that the intellects of those who are veiled are barred from such [knowledge]; [*then fear the Fire*] what is meant by the Fire is their being consumed by the upheaval of their souls and the evil of their natures, [natures] which are turned away from the spiritual holy spirit and the breeze of the tasting of the Compassionate, and deprived from the pleasure of the coolness of certainty and the safety of the abode of permanence, severed [as their natures are] by the habits of the senses and corporeal pleasures, prohibited by what they have become addicted and accustomed to, while there remain [within them] the yearning for that [spirit] and the rapture [felt for it], [but] the deeply rooted conditions of attachment to the lower affairs in them and their love of earthly bodies are the causes of the igniting of their fires, which is why He says: *whose fuel is men, and stones*, that is, the silent sensory lower matters to which they are attached out of love so that the forms of these [matters] have become deeply-rooted in their souls while their souls have become imprisoned by having inclined to these very [forms]. As the Messenger, peace and blessings be upon him, said: 'Every person is gathered [at the resurrection] with the one that he loves, so that if one of you loved a stone he will be gathered with it'. How can it



be otherwise when his own form has fixed itself within him through love so that the form of his heart has become his own form. Know that the [intensity of the] heat of the fire follows from its [arche-]typal form that constitutes its spirituality and its kingdom, for otherwise it would be equal in its specific qualities to all bodies; that spirituality are sparks of the fire of God's overwhelming supra-sensory power after its descent into several ranks, such as its descent into the rank of the soul upon the upheaval of rage, for the upheaval of rage might have the effect of consuming the character traits in a way that not even fire might have on firewood. Hence it can be known that not every thing that receives heat has to be hot. For if physical fire results from spiritual fire, then its pain must undoubtedly be stronger and longer lasting from the other fire. How can it be otherwise when every physical capacity which is finite is lesser than any spiritual capacity. Because of this signification it is said that the fire of Hell was washed with water 70 times before it was sent down to this world so that it can be made use of; *prepared for the disbelievers*, who are veiled from religion severed as they are from their wants.

[2:25] *And give good tidings to those who believe*, in the Maker and who have performed deeds that make them good for Paradise in accordance with their knowledge of the unity of [God's] acts, [give them good tidings] that they shall have what they want and desire over and above what they imagined and longed for, because of the indefinite form of 'Gardens'. Gardens underneath which rivers run are the most splendid and delightful that a place can be and the most pleasurable and sweetest that a desired thing can be for the people of this world, for these [gardens] for their souls are of the same kind as the gardens of this world but purer than them, commensurate with the physicality of the final return, which is real as you shall see;

[*and perform righteous deeds, that theirs shall be Gardens underneath which rivers run*]  
*whensoever they are provided with fruits therefrom, they shall say, 'This is what we were provided with before'*, in this world as they are familiar with them; *and they shall be given it*, [this] provision, *in perfect semblance*, being stations for their hearts, such as [the station of] reliance, for example, and the lushest gardens of the world of the Holy every rank of which produces rivers of knowledge that profit the wayfarers and benefit the malady of those spiritually thirsty who are yearning, while the fruits are the wisdoms and the gnostic sciences. As for their saying *This is what we were provided with before*, this is an allusion to the fact that such sciences and wisdoms are fixed for the heart in its state of disengagement, but become veiled from it when it is preoccupied with matters of the physical world upon its attachment to it, forgetting them as a result and only remembering them upon its being disengaged from its vestments. For

the Prophet said: 'Wisdom is the believer's ultimate goal'; [*and there for them shall be spouses purified*]: [these are] spouses for their souls, black-eyed houris pure of any lewdness and untouched, and for their hearts [the spouses are] the holy souls pure of the blemishes of physical nature and the impurity of the elements, but there is no Paradise for their spirits because these are veiled from the witnessing; [*therein they shall abide*].

[2:26] *God is not ashamed*, He is not prohibited by what would [normally] prohibit the one who experiences shame, *to strike a similitude even of a gnat, or anything above it*, for in the eyes of God the disbeliever is lowlier than a gnat and this world [lowlier] than its wings, as stated by the *ḥadīth*.

[*as for the believers, they know*] *it is the truth from their Lord*, because of the interrelationship between the thing struck as similitude and the one for whom the similitude has been struck; [*but as for disbelievers, they say, 'What did God desire by this for a similitude?' Thereby He leads many astray and thereby He guides many*];

*and thereby He leads none astray except the wicked*, those who have departed from the station of the heart to the station of the soul and from obedience to the Compassionate to obedience of Satan, being the second group among the wretched ones and not the first group, for they are in error with regard the same matter in any case neither because of it [the similitude] or because of any other reason. Their being led into error thereby [i.e. by the similitude struck] is caused by their wickedness in reality, since the fact that the ruling follows from the description gives the impression of it [the description] being the cause, and that is their increasing obstinacy, their denial, their spitefulness and the overpowering of their hearts by the attributes of their souls upon the mention of the Qur'ān, increasing their distance and [increasing them] in darkness upon darkness.

[2:27] *Those such as break the covenant of God after its solemn binding*: this is what is alluded to in His statement: *And when your Lord took from the Children of Adam, from their loins, their seed and made them testify against themselves, 'Am I not your Lord?', they said, 'Yea, indeed ...'* [Q. 7:172]. It is mentioned in a *ḥadīth* that God, exalted be He, stroked Adam's back with His hand and brought forth his seed from him like particles, [to the end of] the *ḥadīth*. God's hand is the holiest intellect and the first spirit which is the spirit of the world that is referred to as the right-hand of the Compassionate; Adam is the universal reasoning soul<sup>15</sup> which is itself the heart of the world; His stroking of his back constitutes the effect of the intellect upon it [the soul] and its illuminating of

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<sup>15</sup> Humans are endowed with the faculty of speech (*nuṭq*) by means of which they are able to reason, hence to be rational (*'aql*).

it by His light through the spiritual joining; His bringing forth of his seed from him constitutes the bringing into existence of the individual partial souls that had been inside it in potentiality and bringing them out in actuality; God's covenant with them where He says, 'Am I not your Lord?', is the depositing of the knowledge of [His] Oneness in their essences; the binding of that covenant is the propping up of the proofs of His Oneness in their intellects and His obligating them to that knowledge, making it a binding aspect of their essences, so that upon their disengagement from the attributes of the soul and the coverings of the body such [knowledge] would [immediately] become clear to them and the most manifest and obvious of things would be disclosed to them, namely, their having been made to testify against themselves, since such knowledge would at that instance become necessary. Their response to that [question] with 'Yea, indeed', constitutes their essential acceptance of that [truth]. Their breaking of that covenant is their total engrossment in the carnal pleasures and the trappings of the physical world and their enslavement by their desires and lusts such that they become veiled by these from [the knowledge of] God's Oneness and His worship. [*and such as cut what God has commanded should be joined*]: their 'cutting of what God has commanded should be joined' is their turning away from the joining with the Holy Spirit, the highest points of origin [of motion] and the heavenly spirits who are the High Council [cf. Q. 37:8] and the inhabitants of the Divine Presence from among those of the realm of the Divine attributes (*jabarūt*) and the angelic realm (*malakūt*) who keep company with them in essence and in attribute, being the ones whose nearness they should in reality seek and their manifest ties of kinship which they have been commanded to cement in reality, [turning away instead] by orienting themselves towards the lower world and by their love of dark and corrupted substances and their adoration of and their being smitten by vile and transient matters, which is why the Prophet said: 'Verily God loves exalted and noble matters and dislikes inanities, for the viler the thing demanded by the soul the further it is from the noble world:

'People in love with things come in all shapes and sizes, but those most excused [for such love] are those who have none'.

[*and such as do corruption in the land — they shall be the losers*] The explanation of 'doing corruption in the land' has already been given; as for the 'great loss' [of the losers], that is the forsaking of the permanent luminous substance in exchange for the transient dark [substance].

[2:28] *How do you disbelieve in God*, that is, in which state are you veiled from Him, when your state is that of, *when you were dead*, drops of sperm in the loins of your forefathers, *and He gave you life*, in other words, why do you not see the proof of the

Creator in [His] creation, *then He shall make you dead*, through natural death, *then He shall give you life*, through resurrection, for the former is known by means of the witnessing while the latter [is known] by deduction from the original creation, *then to Him you shall be returned!*, for requital, or [it means] that He makes you dead [separated] from your souls through voluntary death which is annihilation in the Oneness, whereafter He gives you life through true life which is subsistence after annihilation through that existence which is the bestowal of the Truth, after which you are returned to Him for the witnessing (*mushābada*), if the unity is the unity of [His] attributes, or for the presential vision (*shubūd*), if the unity is the unity of His Essence.<sup>16</sup>

[2:29] *He it is Who created for you all that is in the earth*, in other words, the lower aspect which is the world of the elements in its entirety since it constitutes the origin points of your creation and the substrata of your existence and subsistence; *then He presided over [the heaven]*, that is, He turned evenly to the upper aspect – *thumma* ('then') is used to indicate a separation between the two aspects and the two moments of existentionation, the originational (*ibdā'ī*) and the creational (*takwīnī*), and not a lapse between the two time periods, so that the creation of the earth necessarily precedes that of the heavens; *[and He levelled them seven heavens and He has knowledge of all things]*: He then proportioned them as seven heavens according to what the generality thinks, for the eighth and the ninth [heavens] are [respectively] the seat (*kursī*) and the throne (*'arsh*) in their manifest dimension. In reality the lower aspect is the corporeal world, like the body and its limbs given its inferior rank in relation to the spiritual world which is the upper aspect referred to by the expression 'heaven'; *thumma* is used to indicate a separation between [the act of] creation and the command; 'and He levelled them seven heavens' is an allusion to the ranks of the world of spiritual beings: the first is the angelic earthly realm and the forces of the soul and the jinn; the second is the world of the soul; the third is the world of the heart; the fourth is the world of the intellect; the fifth is the world of the mysteries; the sixth is the world of the spirit while the seventh is the world of concealment, which is the spiritual mystery distinct from the mystery of the heart. It is to this that the Commander of the Believers [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, alluded when he said: ‘Ask me about the paths of the heavens, for I know them better than the paths of the earth’. Its paths are the states and the stations such as renunciation, reliance, satisfaction and the like. Know that the intellect when referred to by the term wisdom is the spirit in the terminology of the

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<sup>16</sup> Chittick: “If *shubūd* can be distinguished from *mushābada*, it may be in the sense that *shubūd* is used more generally, as a synonym for seeing and vision on any level of existence, whereas *mushābada* is more often used as a synonym for unveiling” (1989: 227).

Sufis. And what we have referred to as the intellect in the terminology of the Sufis is the rational faculty that belongs to the speaking soul according to the philosophers. That is why the Sufis say that the intellect is the polished part of the heart illuminated by the light of the spirit, while the heart is the speaking soul. Remember this lest [your] understanding become confused by the different terms [used].

[2:30] *And when your Lord said to the angels: idh* ('when') refers to an endless duration that is from pre-eternity to sempiternity; the 'saying' is the casting of the meaning of the connectedness of God's will to the existentionation of Adam onto the holy essences of the realm of divine power, namely the angels brought near and the disengaged spirits and those [spirits] of the angelic realm constituting the heavenly souls. For everything that occurs in the world of engendered things has a form before becoming engendered in the world of the spirit which is the world of the pre-decree, followed by the world of the heart which is the heart of the world known as the Preserved Tablet, followed by the world of the soul, namely, the soul of the world that is the Tablet of 'effacement and fixing' [cf. Q. 13:39] expressed as the heaven of this world (*samā' al-dunyā*) in the revelation, as God says: *And there is not a thing but that the stores thereof are with Us, and We do not send it down except in a known measure* [Q. 15:21]. That then is His saying to the angels: ***'I am appointing on earth a vicegerent'***: consider in yourself your state, for all that manifests itself upon your limbs, which constitute your engendered world and the world of your witnessing, in the way of words and deeds exists within your spirit which is hidden beyond your unseen and in the unseen of your unseen then in your soul which is the closest unseen to you and your heaven of this world before it becomes manifest upon your limbs; 'to appoint' is more general than origination and engenderment. He did not say 'I am creating' because man is a composite of both worlds. A viceregent that will assume My character traits and My descriptions and execute My command and rule My creatures and manage their affair, keeping their laws in check, summoning them to obedience of Me. The disapproval of the angels when they said: ***'What, will You appoint therein one who will do corruption therein and shed blood,*** and their intimation of the priority that they enjoy by saying: ***while we glorify You with praise and sanctify You?'***, is their being veiled from the manifestation of the inner meaning of divinity and the lordly descriptions in him [sc. Adam], which are among the specific qualities of the social condition and the composition that subsumes both worlds and restricts what is in both engendered things, and it is their knowledge of the fact that there will ensue bestial acts, such as the working of corruption in the earth, and [acts of] predation expressed in the 'shedding of blood', both of which are specific qualities of the power of passion and anger whose existence is necessary given the attachment of the spirit to the

body; and [their knowledge] that the purity of their essences and the sanctity of their souls [makes them] above such [acts]. For every class of the holy angels has an insight into what [class] is below them and into their souls, but no insight into what [class] is above them. They are aware that since the upper luminous spirit is attached to the lower dark body there must be an intermediary that corresponds to the spirit on the one hand and to the body on the other, and that is the soul, the refuge for all evil and the source of all corruption; but they are not aware of the fact that the all-comprehensiveness of humankind attracts the divine light, itself a mystery. [*He said,*] *'Assuredly, I know what you know not'*. The difference between glorification (*tasbīḥ*) and sanctification (*taqdīs*) is that to glorify is to exalt [God] above the association of partner and incapacity and deficiency, while to sanctify is to exalt [God] above any attachment to locus or submission to receptivity or the blemishes of possibility as well as multiplicity of His Essence and attributes, or that any of His perfections should be [merely] potential [as opposed to actual]. Thus sanctification is more specific [than glorification], for every thing that is sanctified is [necessarily] glorified, but not every glorified thing is [necessarily] sanctified. For the angels brought near who are the disengaged spirits by their very disengagement [from substrata] and their not being veiled from the light of their Lord and their overpowering of those below them by their effusion of light upon them and their effect upon others and because all of their perfections are actual, they are the sanctifiers. The other heavenly and earthly angels are glorifiers on account of the simplicity of their essences and the specific qualities of their acts and their perfections.

[2:31] *And He taught Adam the names, all of them*, that is, He cast upon his heart the specific qualities of things, [the qualities] by which they, their benefits and their harmfulness, can be known. *Then He presented them*, that is, He presented those named things, *to the angels*, through their witnessing of the human structure and their accompaniment of Adam in the revelation. The meaning of His words: *and He said, 'Now tell Me the names of these if you speak truly'*, [is] His will that they be revitalised by some of the objects of man's knowledge, as required by the human composition and the conveying of the objects of his senses and his diverse knowledge, temporally originated in him through the specificity of [his] composition and his social condition, to their essences after not having been [there], since their knowledge ensues from his knowledge and that is the sense in which they are dumbfounded [by God] and the connection between that and His will is reflected in the command given to Adam to 'tell', since all of the human faculties and the angels that are in His presence are

revitalised by what in a different locus they would not be revitalised; that is the meaning of Adam's telling them [of the names].

[2:32] As for the meaning of: *They said, 'Glory be to You! We know not except what You have taught us. Surely You are the Knower, Wise'*, [that is] the testimony of their being through evidence and of the tongues of their state that they fall short of the human perfections and their inability to outdo them; and [testimony] of God's being above an act that would entail corruption in general and their awareness of their inability to rise to their levels by the acquisition of knowledge, since their perfections go hand in hand with their being and that His knowledge, exalted be He, is above their knowledge, for He is the absolute Knower and the Wise that does only what ought to be done, which is why He says:

[2:33] *He said, 'Adam, tell them their names'*, and He did not say 'teach them' because acquired knowledge that entails [spiritual] ascension is of the specific qualities of the all-comprehensiveness of humankind. Thus each [quality] accepts only what accords with its nature of that genus of perceptibles and not any other. Just as, for example, vision [exists in humans] because of the many visible things, so it does not increase knowledge or level and accepts only what belongs to the genus of visibles even if these be manifold. Such is the state of every inner faculty. [*And when he had told them their names He said*] As for the meaning of: *'Did I not tell [you that I know the Unseen in the heavens and the earth?]* [that is] an affirmation by Him concerning the natures of the angels, that He, exalted be He, knows what they know not of the Unseen in the heavens and the earth, that which is the mystery of spiritual knowledge and [divine] love, deposited in man whose knowledge God has taken unto Himself.

*And I know what you reveal*, of what you know regarding the corrupt acts of man, *and what you were hiding*, in the way of your deeming your essences preferable to his on account of their purity and sanctity.

[2:34] *And when We said to the angels, 'Prostrate yourselves to Adam:* their prostrating to Adam represents their pliancy and their submissiveness to him and their being rendered obedient to him and at his disposal; *so they prostrated themselves, except Iblis, he refused and disdained:* Iblis is the illusory power because it does not belong to the [class of] purely earthly angels that are veiled from the ability to perceive meanings by perceiving forms so that it would [like these angels] yield to the overwhelming power of God out of obedience to His command; nor does it belong to the [class of] heavenly rational [angels] so that it would [like these] become aware of the noble status of Adam and in harmony with his intellect and thus yield out of love seeking divine approval. He [Iblis] was of the jinn, that is, from among those of the lower angelic realm and the

earthly power. He was reared and raised behind the backs of the heavenly angels because of his capacity to perceive meanings of particulars and his ascension to the horizon of reason; that is why compared to the intellect in man, he [Iblīs] was like the animals that are incapable of speech. His refusal is his non-submission to reason and his refraining from accepting its wisdoms; his disdain is his attempt to be superior to that which was created from clay and to the heavenly and earthly angels by not adhering to the limits of his ability to perceive those meanings of particulars that are attached to the impressions of the senses; [his disdain is also] his transgressing his condition by delving into rational meanings and universal rules; *and so he became one of the disbelievers*, who are pre-eternally veiled from the lights of the intellect and the coupled [lights] in addition to the light of unity.

[2:35] *And We said, 'Adam, dwell and your partner in the Garden*, his partner is the soul and is named Ḥawwā' (Eve) because of her constant clinging to the body of darkness, since life (*ḥayāt*) is the colour that is preponderantly black, while the heart is named Adam because of its attachment to the body though not constantly, for *adama* is a tanned colour, that is, the colour which is close to black. Were it not for his attachment, he would not have been named Adam. The 'Garden' in which the two [Adam and Eve] were commanded to remain is the heaven of the world of spirits that is the holy garden. In other words, [the command to them is] 'Remain in the heaven of the spirit'; *and eat thereof easefully where you desire*, that is, embrace and walk amply across it to receive the meanings, knowledge and wisdoms in it, that are the nourishments of the heart and the spiritual fruits, as amply as you wish, and in any direction, level, state or station that you desire. For it is everlasting, unceasing and unprohibited; [*but do not come near this tree*] *lest you be evildoers (ẓālimīn)*', who place light in the place of darkness which is not its place, and who diminish the light of their preparedness and their share of the world of light; for [the meaning of] *ẓulm* is traditionally understood as [meaning] to place something where it does not belong; lexically [it means] to take away from an obligatory right or share.

[2:36] *Then Satan caused them to slip therefrom*, that is, He led them to slip from their station in Paradise into the abyss<sup>17</sup> of nature by seducing [them] with carnal pleasures and [the prospect of] their permanence for them; *and brought them out of what they were in*, of bliss and everlasting ease. It is said that while they were gazing around in the Garden a peacock surprised them appearing before them on the walls of the Garden.

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<sup>17</sup> The word *mahwā* in Arabic can also signify 'the object of one's desire' and this significance should be borne in mind given the association made above with 'nature'.



Eve drew close to it and Adam followed, whereupon Satan whispered to them from behind the wall. It is also said that he used a serpent that was scaling the [walls of the] Garden by holding onto its tail in order to climb into the Garden. The former [report] indicates that he used the passions as a means [to seduce them] from outside the Garden; the latter [an indication] of his use of anger, while his scaling the wall of the Garden is an indication that anger is closer to the spiritual horizon and the space occupied by the heart than passion; *and We said, 'Go down*, that is, We compelled them to go down to the lower aspect, which is the corporeal world; *some of you an enemy to the other*, a circumstantial qualification of [their] state,<sup>18</sup> binding to that [descent], for the descent to this world, which is the lower aspect, requires that whatever is demanded in it be of a partial nature, given the confines of matter, restricted and unable to support more than one sharing in it, so that whenever one person acquires it, another is deprived of it and denied it. Thus enmity and hatred afflicts them [in this world] in contrast to universal demands. The plural form of address [some of you] is used because the address is directed to the [human] species, since the root always subsumes its branches; *and in the earth*, that is, in this aspect, *a dwelling*, a settling, *shall be yours, and enjoyment for a while'*, that is, until their disengagement [from matter] upon voluntary death<sup>19</sup> or the termination of their share through natural death and the arrival of the resurrection, be it the minor or the major one.

[2:37] *Thereafter Adam received certain words from his Lord*, that is, he received from the direction of his Lord lights and states (*aṭwār*), that is, degrees (*marātib*) from the angelic realm and the realm of the divine attributes, and disengaged spirits, since every disengaged thing is a word as it comes from the world of the command, in the same way that Jesus was called a Word. Or [it means] that he received from Him spiritual knowledge, sciences and realities, *and He relented to him*, He accepted his return to Him through his disengagement from the natural garments and his entry into the community of the lights of the spiritual world (*malakūt*) and his assumption of the descriptions of the holy perfections and the self-disclosure through real sciences. The basic sense of *tāba 'alayhi* ('He relented to him') is He cast upon him the repentance and made him repentant. Upon my life! That is the repentance that is accepted [by God] and not the return that issues from his part; *truly He is the Relenting*, the One who is ever-accepting of the repentance of His servants, *the Merciful*, whose mercy has preceded His wrath so that He is merciful to His servant in the midst of His wrath, just

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<sup>18</sup> The expression *ḥāl* is a grammatical term in Arabic but of course a reference to their spiritual state (*ḥāl*) upon their expulsion from Paradise.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Chittick 1989:295. According to Ibn 'Arabī [...]

as He turned His wrath against Adam the cause of his perfection and return to Him, distancing him so that he might draw closer to Him.

[2:38] *We said, 'Go down from it all together:* He repeats [mention of] this matter of the descent to demonstrate that it was He who wanted that, for were it not for His will Iblis would not have been able to lead them astray. That is why He attributes the sending down to Himself unattached to the cause after having attributed their being brought out [of the Garden] to Satan. This [instance] is similar to where He says to His Prophet: *And you threw not when you threw but God threw* [Q. 8:17]. Thus he [Adam] comprehended the mystery of His decree and destiny, and He made clear the wisdom inherent in the sending down [of Adam and Eve] by following it up with His words: *yet there shall come to you from Me guidance, and whoever follows My guidance, no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve.* The use of the [coordinating particle] *fā'* is that were it not for the 'going down', they would not have been able to pursue the guidance, nor would the fortunate be distinguished from the damned, nor would reward and punishment have been forthcoming and the abode of recompense, in the way of the Garden and the Fire, would have become invalid, nay would not have come into existence. 'Guidance' is the Law, and whoever follows it will be secure from evil consequence and will not fear any punishment or annihilation and would have found solace in things other than the passions and the [carnal] pleasure, grieving not for what he will have missed of the ephemeral things of this world or its bliss, as the eye of his heart will have been adorned by the light of the pursuit [of guidance] and his being guided to what cannot be measured in terms of the pleasures of this world in the way of spiritual tastings and the mysterious openings and the witnessings of the heart and the rational sciences and the excitements of the soul.

[2:39] *As for the disbelievers,* those veiled from religion as it corresponds to the pursuit of guidance, and He complements this with His statement: *who deny Our signs, those shall be the inhabitants of the Fire, the Fire of privation, abiding therein'.*

[2:40] *O Children of Israel, remember My favour wherewith I favoured you and that I have preferred you above all the worlds* [Q. 2:47]<sup>20</sup> [*and fulfil My covenant, and I shall fulfil your covenant; and have awe of Me*]. The Children of Israel are the people of the divine gentleness and the recipients of the favour of guidance and prophethood. He calls to them with gentleness and a reminder of the former favour and the bygone covenant

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<sup>20</sup> This part of the verse belongs to a later section, see Q. 2:47, but seems to have replaced *and fulfil My covenant, and I shall fulfil your covenant; and have awe of Me* which are the words that belong here.

taken from them in the Torah to affirm the unity of the acts after the pre-eternal covenant, which is the way with [one's] beloved after [a period of] estrangement:

Were there not between us ties of kinship and bonds

As well as affection and brotherhood?

This [divine] call is specifically qualified by the affirmation of the unity of [His] attributes that is the lifting of the second veil. It is more specific than the first general call made to remind [them] of the favour of religion and the covenant and the [divine] self-disclosure through the attribute of favour-giver and guardian. The threat against the failure to respond [to this divine call] is made in terms of 'awe' (*rabba*), which is more specific than fear (*kbawf*); for fear is [the reaction] to punishment, while awe is that to wrath and overwhelming power causing reluctance and becoming veiled from something; apprehension (*kbashya*) is more specific than [awe] because it is specific to the veiling of the essence. God, exalted be He, says: *They are apprehensive of their Lord and fear an awful punishment* [Q. 13:21]; likewise 'awe' because it is connected to the greatness of the essence.

[2:41] *And believe in what I have revealed*, of the Qur'an to My beloved of the unity of [My] attributes, *confirming that which is with you*, in the Torah of the unity of [My] acts, *and be not the first to disbelieve in it*, that is, the first to be veiled therefrom, veiled as you are by your belief. *And do not sell*, that is, do not exchange, *My signs*, those indicating the self-disclosures of My essence and attributes, such as the *sūrat al-ikhlāṣ* [Q. 112] and the *kursī*-verse [Q. 2:255] and the like, *for a small price*, that is, for the paradise of your soul because of your habituation to the sensory pleasures and the reward of deeds through the affirmation of the unity of acts. If you [are wont to] guard against association [of others with Me], then guard against the assault of My overwhelming power, majesty and veil by seeking My approval and not affirming an attribute to any other than Me; [*and fear Me*].

[2:42] *And do not obscure the truth with falsehood*, that is to say, and do not mix His fixed attributes, such as His knowledge, power and will with falsehood, [falsehood] such as the attributes of your souls when manifested as attributes, and your failure to distinguish between the motives and incoming thoughts of these and the motives of [God] the Truth and His mind. [*and do not conceal the truth*] Do not suppress them by means of the veil of the attributes of the soul and its concealing of these upon its manifestation; *while you have knowledge*, of the science of the unity of the acts, for the source of an act is the attribute, so just as you do not attribute the act to any other than Him, so do not affirm an attribute to any other than Him.

[2:43] *And establish prayer, and pay the alms*, seeking My approval instead of anticipating My reward: this is corroborated by His statement, *and bow with those that bow*, since the act of bowing is submission and obedience to the object of that act; it is the sign of satisfaction which is the legacy of the self-disclosure of the attributes. The purpose [of that] is to say: be satisfied with what I decree when you inspect My attributes. The orientation upon the performance of the act is the indication that reward and recompense is being sought on account of the soul being independent with its form. Prostration which is the ultimate submission is the sign of being annihilated in the unity upon the self-disclosure of the Essence.

[2:44] *Will you bid others to piety*, which is the beautiful act that results in purity of the heart and wholesomeness of the soul whose illumination is thereby increased; *and forget yourselves*: will you not act in accordance with that by which you rise from the station of the self-disclosure of the acts to the self-disclosure of the attributes? *while you recite the Book*, of your primordial nature that commands you to follow Muḥammad in his religion, the one that will lead you to the path of God's unity? *Do you not understand?*, a rhetorically powerful rebuke and a provocation of their fanaticism.

[2:45] *Seek help*, ask for assistance and aid from the One who has the power, since you have no power over your own acts, *in [exercising] patience*, over the acts that are done to you that you hate, your constraint and your intentions so that you might arrive at the station of satisfaction, *and [performing] prayer*, which is when the heart is present to receive the self-disclosures of the attributes. *For indeed it*, indeed self-examination, that is, the presence of the heart, *is grievous*, burdensome and heavy, *except for the humble*, whose hearts are broken and pliant enough to receive the lights of the subtle self-disclosures and the take-over of the assaults the self-disclosures of the overwhelming [divine] power, those who are certain that they are in the presence of their Lord, that is, the presence of the attributes indicated by the Lord in the state of His encounter;

[2:46] [*who reckon that they shall meet their Lord*], *and that to Him they are returning*, upon the annihilation of their attributes and their effacement by His attributes.

[2:47] [*O Children of Israel, remember My favour wherewith I favoured you, and that I have preferred you above all the worlds*]

The address is repeated in order to communicate that the One who guided them first and was gentle to them and favoured them over the two veiled worlds of their time by guiding them to the lifting of the first veil, is One who guides them a second time. So just as He did not desire any evil for them at the time of the first guidance, likewise at the time of the second guidance He only desires good for them;

[2:48] *and fear the day when*, that is, when the attribute of [divine] overwhelming power discloses itself, *no soul for another shall give satisfaction*, none shall avail [another], because no one will have that power, *and no intercession shall be accepted from it*, because there will be no intercession or assistance, since they shall all be deprived of attributes and acts, as [the poet] says: ‘Nor do you see the lizard slip into its burrow then’; *nor any compensation be taken*, that is, [no] ransom, since no one will have any possessions, *neither shall they be helped*, because no one other than Him, exalted be He, will have power and [the power to] provide assistance.

[2:49] *And when We delivered you from the folk of Pharaoh*: its exoteric aspect and its explanation is as it appears, reminding [them] of the favours to incite love [on their part], while its esoteric aspect and interpretation [is]: And when We delivered you from the folk of Pharaoh, the [evil-]commanding soul (*al-nafs al-ammāra*) that is veiled by its own egoism thinks itself superior to the Master of Existence; Egypt is the city of the body which, together with its faculties of estimation, imagination, evacuation, wrath, passion and the spiritual powers, namely the sons of God’s close friend, Jacob, have enslaved the spirit, the natural powers of the body in the form of the external senses, as well as the vegetative powers; *who were visiting you with evil chastisement*, charging you with difficult hardships, toil and heavy labour when you [attempt to] secure goods and and store them away eagerly and expectantly, and [when] you organise your sources of nourishment and clothing and other things for which the eager among the children of this world toil; enslaving you by making you think of and concern yourselves [only] with the supervision of such [matters], while they are concerned in securing their pleasures, which [in fact] is [their] chastisement, since these [pleasures] prevent you from your [own] pleasures, *slaughtering your sons*, namely, those spiritual powers, [severing them] from the speculative rational [faculties] and the practical rational [faculties], the two that constitute the two eyes of the heart, the speculative right one and the practical left one, as well [slaughtering your] understanding which is the hearing [faculty] of the heart, and the mystery that is the heart of the heart and reflection and remembrance; *and sparing your women*, the above-mentioned natural powers, by preventing the former group from acts specific to subjugation and seizure, veiling it from the life and support of the light of the spirit; and by enabling and giving stability to the second group over its acts; *and therein*, [in that] deliverance, *for you was a tremendous trial*, a tremendous favour, *from your Lord*, namely the grace of being able to inspect the attributes of His majesty and beauty; or [it means] in that chastisement there is for you a tremendous affliction, namely, the affliction of being veiled, of

privation and removal, for a trial, which is a test, ensues from these. God, exalted be He, says: *And We tried them with good things and evil things* [Q. 7:168].

[2:50] *And when We divided*, by your presence (*wujūd*), [*for you*] *the sea*, that is, the black clamouring sea that is the corporeal substratum when it was parted by your presence as the earth is parted by [rising] plants; *and We delivered you*, by disengaging you therefrom, *and drowned Pharaoh's folk*, namely, [drowning] the ego-centric power in it by forcing it to cling to it and its destruction on account of its corruption, *while you were [beholding]*, witnessing that. Accordingly one can interpret the Children of Israel at the beginning of the address as [representing] those spiritual powers; the favour by which He favoured them as the guidance [He gave them] to the acceptance of the lights effusing upon these [powers] from the world of the spirit and [to] the reception of the gnostic sciences and wisdoms and their fulfilment of the covenant and their projecting forth of what is centred in these [powers] in accordance with the initial preparedness in the way of the proofs of unity and the universal meanings that lie dormant within them through purification and the performance of acts specific to these. His fulfilment of the covenant with them is the effusion of the light of perfection upon these [powers] when they give what is due to the light of preparedness by way of purification and employing what they possess in the way of meanings. If you are to be in awe of something, then be in awe of the veiling [from you] of My lights upon the disappearance of your preparedness; and believe, that is to say, and accept what is effused upon you by Me in the way of luminous radiations and auspicious thoughts from the Unseen as verification [from Me] of the light of primordial nature [contained] within your preparedness. And do not be among the foremost rank of those veiled from the acceptance of these [from Me] by orienting yourselves towards the lower aspect. And do not exchange these for the pleasures of the soul and what it seeks. And do not muddle the truth of the spiritual sciences and the holy lights with the false demands of the senses and the attributes of the soul, suppressing those lights and sciences by allowing these to manifest themselves upon you. And establish and maintain your orientation towards the Presence of the Spirit and towards the fulfilment of Its command. And pay the alms [due] upon those things known to you, which are your wealth, by perusing them and composing them so that you might secure thereby the reward of the results and the concomitants [of such knowledge]. And expend these [alms] upon the poor in your presence, [these poor] being the natural corporeal powers so that these [latter] can survive on them and acquire through them virtuous character traits and beautiful dispositions. Teach these to the children of your species so that they might reach perfection thereby. Bow and submit to the acceptance of intelligible

commands, spiritual lights and the acts of the heart: *Will you bid others to piety and forget yourselves ...* [Q. 2:44], [that is to say], will you direct the faculties below you through [imposing on them] beautiful devotions and virtuous manners to rise to your station and to assume your manners but forget to edify your souls in the presence of God with the manners of the spiritual folk, to practise self-examination, to illumine yourselves by the lights of the spirit at the station of witnessing and to rise to His station upon being annihilated in the Unity; [all this] while you recite from the Book of intelligibles sent down from the Lord of the spirit by means of the angel of the intellect to the Prophet of the heart. Will you not understand by means of the intellect that is disengaged from the blemishes of caprice (*hawā*) and illusion (*wahm*). And seek assistance through patience against what manifests itself upon you and comes [upon you] as a result of the sway of the lights of the authority of the Spirit and its stipulations and the overwhelming power of the self-disclosures of the Greatness and [by] the presence of the Truth. And verily the seeking of such assistance is burdensome except to the humble, the satisfied, who submit to the obedience of the commands of the heart and the spirit, those who are certain that they are in His Presence and upon His encounter and that they are returning to Him by the acceptance of His lights. Their being favoured over the worlds is the honour they enjoy over all the faculties that man possesses.

[2:51] *And when We appointed for Moses*, after concluding his struggle against Pharaoh's folk and destroying them, *forty nights*, during which he will devote himself exclusively to Us so that the natural coverings that had veiled his heart from the nature of light would be lifted during the forty [days] in which his body was being created out of the fetal form and while he was veiled as a result of this formation from [his] primordial nature — as reported in a *ḥadīth*: 'He fermented the clay from which Adam was made in His hand for forty mornings' — [and] from his heart's aspect, and so that the wisdom of the Torah should emerge from his heart and manifest itself upon his tongue; *then you took to yourselves [the Calf after him]*, the calf of the deficient animal soul as a god after his separating himself from you and his absence from you; *and you were evildoers*, assigning worship where it does not belong.

[2:52] *Then We pardoned you after that*, your grotesque deed and vile transgression, through your repentance upon Moses's return to you, [*so that you might be thankful*] so that you might be grateful for the grace of My pardon by visualising that grace as coming from the Gracious One and [so that you might] prepare to accept the self-disclosure of the attribute of Grace. According to another interpretation [it means]: 'And We appointed for Moses the heart upon his becoming attached to the body and

veiled from his people, the spiritual powers, for the forty nights during which his corporeal structure was being created; then you took to worshipping the calf of the animal soul, [Moses] as the infant, after his absence in the state of childhood; *then We pardoned you after that*, worship by the real maturation [of Moses] and the self-manifestation of the light of the heart upon your disengagement, so that you might be thankful for the grace of My granting you success in [attaining] that disengagement and My preparing [for you] of the means for your perfection by your following of the path of My attributes.

[2:53] *And when We gave to Moses [the Scripture and the Criterion, so that you might be guided]*, [when We gave Moses] the heart, the Book of intelligibles, wisdoms and gnostic sciences and the criterion that distinguishes between truth and falsehood, so that you might be guided by the light of Its guidance. If taken according to the first sense [the statement] does not need interpretation.

[2:54] [*And when Moses said to his people, 'My people, you have done wrong against yourselves*, you have diminished its due and its share of the reward and the mentioned self-disclosures, *[by your taking the [golden] calf]*. *Now turn to your Creator*, by lifting the first veil, as evidenced by the mention of Him as *al-Bāri'*, *and slay one another's soul*, by the sword of spiritual discipline (*riyāda*) and by denying it [your soul] its shares and the acts that are specifically its, for the purpose of freeing yourselves [from it] and suppressing its caprices, which are the very spirit by which it lives. [If taken] according to the second [sense], the heart inspired the faculties that you diminished what is your due by making the soul the object of your worship, so return to your Creator by the light of His guidance and by means of spiritual discipline prevent your souls from what you are voracious for, by severing them from the life that is temporally originated in them on account of their being overpowered by caprice, so that you might live again in your original life and your repentance be accepted. [*That, will be better for you in your Creator's sight'; He will turn to you [relenting]; truly He is the Relenting, the Merciful.*]

[2:55] *And when you said, 'O Moses, we will not believe*, on account of your guidance to the real faith until you reach the station of witnessing and eyewitness [*you till we see God openly*']; *and the thunderbolt*, of death, *took you*, which is annihilation in the self-disclosure of the Essence, *while you were beholding*, [while] you were observing and witnessing.

[2:56] *Then We raised you up*, with real life and subsistence after annihilation, *after you were dead, so that you might be thankful*, so that you might be grateful for the grace of unity and arrival by means of wayfaring to God.



[2:57] *And We made the clouds overshadow you*, the clouds of the self-disclosure of the attributes, being the veils of the sun of the universally-consuming Essence, *and We sent down upon you [manna and quails]*, in the way of states and tasting stations that combine sweetness with the purging of the depravities of the soul's character traits, such as reliance, satisfaction and the solace of wisdoms, gnosis and real knowledge, gathered upon you by the winds of mercy and the divine breaths in the wilderness of the attributes as you wayfare in it. '*Eat [of the good things We have provided for you]*', that is, consume and receive these good things. *And they did not wrong Us*, they did not diminish what is due to Us or Our attributes by their veiling of themselves under the attributes of their souls; [*but themselves they wronged*]: they were diminishing what is due to their souls by their privation and loss. That is [the sense] of both interpretations. Even though the address is [expressed in] general [terms], it is specific to the 70 chosen ones.

[2:58] *And when We said, 'Enter this city*, that is, the lush garden of the sanctified spirit which is the station of the witnessing, [*and eat freely therein wherever you will,*] *and enter it at the gate*, of satisfaction, as cited by the *ḥadīth* — satisfaction with God's decree is the greatest gate to God — *prostrating*, bent down, submissive to what rushes upon you of the self-disclosures of the descriptions, the acts and the bearing [?]. As for His saying: *and say, 'exoneration'*, that is, ask that God exonerate the sins of your attributes, character traits and acts, *and We shall forgive you your transgressions*, your variegations and the sins issuing from your states, *and We shall give more to those who are virtuous'*, that is the witnesses — on account of his [the Prophet's] statement: 'Virtuousness is to worship God as though you could see Him; [We shall increase them in] the reward of their virtuousness, which is the unveiling of the Essence, or their virtuousness by wayfaring towards God.

[2:59] *Then the evildoers substituted a saying other than that which had been said to them*, that is, they demanded to be described by the attributes of the soul desiring its share instead of demanding to be described by the attributes of God and desiring spiritual shares, as is reported of them [that they would say]: *ḥinṭan samqāthā*, which means, 'we seek the nourishment of the soul'; *so We sent down upon the evildoers*, specifically, *wrath [from the heaven for their wickedness]*, chastisement, straits, constraint and darkness by the imprisonment of the soul and in captivity with the shackles of desire, and through veiling within the bonds of caprice, and in privation and degradation through love of lower matter and its transformation and evanescence by the overwhelming power of the spirit heaven, and [by] the withholding of gentleness and rest from them on account of their wickedness, that is, their seceding from

obedience of the heart to obedience of the soul. We have left out the second interpretation because it is very close to this one.

[2:60] *And when Moses sought water*, sought the sending down of the rains of knowledge, wisdoms and meanings from the heaven of the spirit, [*for his people,*] *We said*, We commanded him to strike the staff of the soul on which he supported himself in his attachment to the body and his remaining fixed on the earth reflecting upon the rock of the brain, which is the foundation point of the intellect: [*Strike with your staff the rock,*] *and there exploded from it twelve fountains*, of the waters of knowledge according to the number of human emotions, which are the five outer senses, the five inner ones as well as the considerative rational and practical [ones]: that is why the Prophet said: 'Whoever loses a sense, then verily he has lost knowledge'; *each people came to know their drinking-place*, that is to say, the people of every [kind of] science [came to know] the source of that science, such as the artisans, the scholars working from the source that is the practical intellect; the wise and the gnostics [from the source that is] the considerative [intellect]; the tanners from the science of seeing colours; the music makers from the science of sounds and so on. According to the second interpretation: We commanded Moses, the heart, to strike the staff of the soul upon the rock of the brain and there exploded from it twelve fountains, which are the mentioned emotions each of which is specific to one of the twelve mentioned powers, namely, the tribes of Jacob, the spirit. Each one came to know its drinking-place. *Eat and drink of that which God has provided*, that is, profit from what God has provided you in the way of knowledge, action, states and stations; *and do not be degenerate in the earth, seeking corruption*', do not go to excess in corruption out of ignorance.

[2:61] [*And when you said,*] *Moses, we will not endure one sort of food*, that is, spiritual nourishment in the way of science, gnosis and wisdom; *pray to your Lord for us, [that He may bring forth for us of what the earth produces — green herbs, cucumbers, garlic, lentils, onions]*; *He said, 'Would you exchange what is better with what is lowlier?'*] Pray to your Lord that provide for us generously and grant us dispensation with regard to what the earth of our souls produces in the way of vile passions, base pleasures and cold amusements and [with regard to] all that comprehends the shares of the soul and its chastisement.

*'Go down to a city, the city of the body, you shall have, therein, what you demanded'; And abasement*, the concomitant of the pursuit of passions and the eager desire to acquire possessions, *and wretchedness*, that is, constant need and constant abiding in the lower aspect [*were cast upon them*]; *and they incurred*, they deserved, *God's wrath*, distance and banishment, *that was because*, of their veiling themselves from God's signs

and His self-disclosures: the remainder is manifest [enough]. According to the second sense, [because of] their slaying of the prophets of the hearts without any established motive against them that would require such [a response], nay by their sheer falsehood in disobeying the commands of the hearts and the intellects and their animosity towards the manifestation [of these commands] *they used to disbelieve the signs of God and slay prophets without right; that was because they disobeyed, and they were transgressors.*

[2:62] *Surely those who believe*, out of traditional faith, and [*and those of Jewry*] the exotericists and [*the Christians*] the esotericists and those [*Sabaeans*] who worshipped the angels of the intellects through their being veiled by intelligibles and [those who worshipped] the planets of the ego-centric powers through their being veiled by illusory and imaginative things; *whoever*, from among them, *believes*, out of real faith, *in God and the Last Day*, being certain of the knowledge of Unity and the Resurrection, *and performs righteous deeds*, that make them good for the encounter with God and the attainment of felicity at the final return — *their wage is*, their reward shall be the abiding spiritual [reward], *with their Lord*, in the way of the Gardens of the attributes and the acts, *and no fear shall befall them*, from the penalties of their acts, *neither shall they grieve*, because of any passing of the self-disclosures of the attributes. The sentence is a parenthetical one within the address to the Children of Israel.

[2:63] *And when We made a covenant with you*, that is, your former covenant or [your] next one, taken from them in the Torah or [taken from them] on the basis of rational proofs, to affirm the Unity of the acts and the attributes, *and We raised above you the Mount*, the mountain of the brain to enable [you] to understand and accept meanings, and We said: ‘*Take*, that is, accept, *forcefully what We have given you*, of the Torah or [of] the Distinguishing Book of the Intellect, [accept it] with earnestness, *and remember what is in it*, heed what the wisdoms, gnoses, sciences and [divine] laws, *so that you might preserve yourselves*’, so that perhaps you might guard against [succumbing to] associating [others with God], ignorance and wickedness.

[2:64] *Then you turned away*, you refrained, *thereafter*, by turning towards the lower aspect, *and but for God’s bounty*, in guiding the intellect, *and His mercy towards you*, through the light of insight and [the light of] the Law, *you would have been among the losers.*

[2:65] *And verily you know [that there were those among you who transgressed the Sabbath]*: know that if mankind were neglected, abandoned and left to their own natures, they would have delved into and ensconced themselves in carnal pleasures and coverings of darkness because of their voracious appetite for and their being accustomed to these since infancy and childhood, until finally their preparednesses would disappear

and they descend from the level of humanity and are transfigured, as God has said: *Those whom God has cursed and with whom He is wroth, and some of whom He has turned into apes and swine* [Q. 5:60]. But if they are guarded and kept in check by means of rational and divine rules as well as wisdoms, manners, admonitions containing the promise of reward and the threat of punishment, they can progress and be illuminated. As the poet says:

*Such is the soul: if neglected it clings to vileness, but if dispatched towards virtues it is resplendent.*

That is why devotions have been instituted and [why] they are obligated to repeat them at specified times, in order to remove from them thereby the filth of [human] natures that accumulates during moments of forgetfulness and in the darkness of distractions that appear at times of engaging in pleasures and committing of lustful acts, so that then their inner being might become illumined by the light of the Presence and their hearts be revitalised in orienting themselves towards [God] the Truth instead of falling and stumbling into the abyss of the capricious soul; and that it might find rest in the refreshment of the spirit and the love of the Oneness from the estrangement of caprice and attachment of multiplicity, as he [the Prophet] said: 'Between the [obligatory] prayer and the next there is expiation for the minor sins committed as long as the grave sins are avoided'. Do you not see that he commanded them [believers] to perform the purificatory wash when in a state of greater impurity from indulging in lustful acts; ablutions when in a state of minor impurity; and upon engaging in the activities of this world during the hours of daylight and night [he commanded them] the five [ritual] prayers that remove the filth of the five senses that accumulates in the soul as a result. For each is [commanded] that which corresponds to it and that is why in the face of the estrangement of being separated throughout the week and the darkness of being solely concerned relentlessly with [their daily] activities and means of livelihood as well as [their] corporeal garments and ego-centric pleasures, one day has been assigned for congregational worship when the orientation is towards the shedding of the estrangement of separation by the intimacy of the coming together so that there occurs love and intimacy between them and the darkness of being distracted by the affairs of this world and the turning away from the Truth disappear by the light of worship and the turning towards [God] and they become illumined.

[2:66] *[And We made it an exemplary punishment for all the former times and for the latter, and an admonition to such as who fear.]*

Thus for the Jews was assigned the first day of the week on account of their being the people of the origin and the manifest, and for the Christians the following [day] as they

are the people of the final return, the spiritual and the hidden who relative to us come after the origin and the manifest; while for the Muslims [was assigned] the last [day of the week] which is Friday because at the end of time they would be the people of the sealing [final] prophethood and the all-comprehensive universal unity. If Saturday is taken to be the last day, according to what has been transmitted, that it is the seventh [day], then in relation to God the Truth, that is because it constitutes the world of the senses to which was made the call of the Jews, being the last of the worlds; then the world of the intellect to which was made the call of the Christians is the first [of these worlds], while Friday is the day of union and the sealing: whoever does not take into account these conventions and observances in the first place the light of his preparedness disappears and is transfigured in the way that the people of the Sabbath were transfigured because of the interdiction concerning fishing [symbolising], that is, the securing and acquisition of ego-centric shares on the Saturday. They connived regarding it by creating a pool on the seashore in which the fish would be trapped [on the Saturday] and they would fish them out on Sunday. In other words, throughout the days of the week they would store up from the waters of the sea of primordial matter (*hayūla*) physical mass in the pools of their homes gathering thereby a variety of foods and drinks, pleasures and distractions so that there accumulated for them ego-centric shares on the day of the Sabbath what sufficed them for the remaining days of the week during which they would be free to engage in livelihoods, artisanship and trades, as is the custom of the Jews and certain cunning Muslims to this day in some communities, so that most of their wicked dealings take place therein. That was their practice with regard to the Sabbath and this proves that all of their moments of presence are directed towards the concerns of this world and the pursuit of the shares of the soul and desire. You see this today: a Muslim's physical form may be engaged in prayer in a mosque while his heart is in the middle of a transaction in the marketplace, so much so that some of them say: 'my accounts register is my prayer', in other words, as soon as I am finished with my this-worldly activities [ready] for prayer my heart begins to peruse my transactions, what I owe others and what others owe me. That necessarily results in a sliding down from the upper human world to the nether animal horizon, being the import of His words: *and We said to them, 'Be apes*, in other words, similar to human beings in form without being [humans] as such, *despised!*', removed and banished. Transfiguration in fact is undeniably true in this world and in the Hereafter. Several verses and reports mention it, such as His statement, exalted be He: *And some of whom He has turned into apes and swine* [Q. 5:60]. It has been reported from him [the Prophet] that he said, 'Transfiguration is of 13 kinds ...', and proceeded to enumerate them and illustrated their [evil] deeds, their acts of disobedience and the reasons for their

transfiguration. In sum, when the characteristic of a given animal predominates in a person and becomes deeply embedded in him so that it erases his preparedness and takes control of his natural disposition and becomes his essential form, like the water that issues from a sulphur spring, his nature becomes the nature of that animal, his soul the soul of that [animal] and so his spirit upon separation [from the body at death] is joined to a body that corresponds to his character whereupon his character becomes his [actual] form, but God knows best.

[2:67] *And when Moses said to his people, 'God commands you to sacrifice a cow',* that is the animal soul, the sacrifice of which constitutes the suppression of its capricious nature, which is its lifeblood, and its being prevented from acts specific to her, by means of the knife blade of spiritual discipline; *they said, 'Do you take us in mockery?'*, scorning us and thinking little of us so that we might obey you and become disposed to you, as was the case with Pharaoh: *Thus did he persuade his people and they obeyed him [Q. 43:54]. He said, 'I take refuge with God lest I should be one of the ignorant':* to scorn, to mock and to seek hegemony over [people] is are the acts of the ignorant.

[2:68] *They said, 'Pray to your Lord for us, that He may make clear to us what she may be',* that is, ask your Lord for us, 'What is it?' *He said, 'He says she is a cow neither old,* in other words, neither of old age such that its preparedness has disappeared and it is engrained in its convictions with its voraciousness for its habits, as with the Sufi after who after the age of 40 becomes [spiritually] 'cold'; *nor virgin,* a youth, whose preparedness falls short of what is [spiritually] required of her and who finds it difficult to bear spiritual discipline, subjugated as she is by the natural powers and her own power; *middling,* halfway, *between that,* mentioned; [*so do what you have been commanded*].

[2:69] [*They said, 'Pray to your Lord for us, that He make clear to us what her colour may be'. He said, 'He says she shall be a cow] golden,* because the colour of the body is black, lacking as it is in luminosity in the first place; the colour of the vegetative soul is green because of the manifestation in it of luminosity, while the prevalence of black in it is on account of its inability to perceive; the colour of the heart is white because of its being disengaged from the body, its perceptive capability and the perfection of its luminosity. Necessarily then the colour of the animal soul in speechless animals is red because of the composite nature of the luminosity of its perception and the blackness of its attachment to the body, since 'red' is a colour between white and black and is composed of them both, albeit the black predominates; it [the soul] is yellow in human beings because the luminosity of its perception predominates by its adjacency to the heart, for yellow is red coloured by white; *bright in colour,* due to the purity of its

preparedness and the radiance of the beam of the heart's light upon it; *gladdening to beholders*', because of the strength of its preparedness and its radiance. The 'beholders' are the perfect individuals who look upon preparednesses because of their obligatory love for the prepared who are able to see and their tasting in their presence.

[2:70] [*They said, 'Pray to your Lord for us, that He make clear to us what she may be;] the cows are all alike to us*, because of the multiplicity of cows with such descriptions, that is, the multiplicity of the kinds of prepared individuals; but not every prepared one is a seeker, for, as they say, not every nature accepts and not every accepting one is a seeker and not every seeker is patient and not every patient one is a finder; *and if God wills, we shall then be guided*', to the sacrifice of this cow. Their saying 'if God wills' is evidence of their preparedness, knowing as they do that affairs are [always] dependent upon the will of God and facilitated by His granting of success; that is why the Messenger of God said, 'Had they not made it conditional [upon God's will], they would not have found her for all eternity'.

[2:71] [*He said, 'He says she shall be a cow] not broken*, made submissive and pliant to the command of the Law, *to plough the earth*, the earth of preparedness with righteous deeds and acts of worship, *or to water the tillage*, the tillage of gnoses and wisdoms that reside therein potentially by exhausting the waters of acquired sciences and piercing reflections, since a cow of this kind does not need to be sacrificed; *one handed over*, its owners had left it to graze without being shepherded by exotericisms (*rusūm*), habits, laws and manners; *with no blemish on her*', that is, it does not have any convictions or dogma engrained in it for not being suitable for sacrifice. [*They said, 'Now] you have brought the truth*', firm [truth] illustrating the prepared one who yearns and seeks perfection] *and so they sacrificed her, even though they very nearly did not*, because of their many questions, exaggerations and probing in the search and scrutiny of her state, and [because of] their superfluous talk in the attempt to seek clarification regarding her, all of which proves how the soul refuses to submit quickly and refrain from spiritual discipline and the prevalence upon it of curiosity: their difficulty in [finding] what they sought and their procrastination regarding it is because of that. That is why the Messenger of God said: 'Had they seized the nearest cow and sacrificed them it would have sufficed them, but they made it more difficult and so God made it more difficult for them. In other words, had they not been so obstrusive in seeking her out and asking [about her] what they sought would not have been so difficult for them on account of the strength of their acceptance and their will: the one who is compliant is easy to lead. The Prophet forbade excessive questioning, saying 'Verily too much questioning destroyed those before you'. God, exalted be He, says: *do not ask about things, which if*

*disclosed to you, would trouble you* [Q. 5:101]. The story of this is that a calf with that description was born to an old man from among the Children of Israel who had an infant son. He brought it to his old wife and told her that it would be this infant's and that she should let it graze freely until he comes of age, that perhaps it might be of benefit to him. When this incident took place and the Children of Israel had been seeking out the cow for forty years, the old woman heard about it and informed her son, who had now grown up, about what his father had said. So he went to the field and found her there and took it. They then began to bargain with him over her, but the old woman forbade him from selling her until they paid her weight in gold: the old man represents the spirit, the old woman corporeal nature, his infant son the intellect which issues from the spirit; the slaughtered young man is the heart. The old man of the spirit handed over the calf of the soul to the old woman of nature so that it would graze in the grazing field of natural pleasures until such time as it had grown, that perhaps the infant of the intellect might profit from it upon coming of age by the extraction of intelligibles from their sensory forms and the use of reflection that constitutes one of its faculties in the acquisition of rational sciences, which is what he [the young man] brought from the grazing field. The forty-year endeavour of the Children of Israel is an allusion to the journeying to God with deeds, manners and the adoption of the character traits until the time for the true coming of age and the disengagement of the heart arrives, as God says: *when he is mature and reaches forty years* [Q. 46:15]. Their bargaining over her [the cow] is an allusion to the quest of the spiritual powers that are illumined by the light of the guidance of the Law and [by] the will, and the extraction of these [spiritual powers] from an intellect blemished by illusion and the enslavement of these [powers] by the intellect by means of analogical intelligibles and the subjugation of these through reflective processes, and their being veiled from the light of the guidance of the Law by means of rational analogies and their not being adorned by matters of the Law: that is what necessarily caused their officious questioning, their delaying and procrastination in fulfilling [God's demand]. The old woman's prohibition [to her son] is nature's resistance to comply with the Law and the intellect's conforming to that [resistance], since the intellect takes the side of nature far more into consideration than it does the Law when it comes to one's best interests in terms of [securing one's] livelihood, with the improved lifestyle, empowerment and enrichment that it brings for it. Selling the cow for the equivalent of her weight in gold is an allusion to its being adorned, after its sacrifice and skinning, with the beneficial sciences of the Law, the intellectual moral [sciences] and the secondary stipulations of religion so that her form is subsumed by these [sciences], [the form] which conforms to the intellect and nature and benefits both of these when they



employ her for the purpose of securing the welfare of livelihood, natural desiderata and the intellectual and practical pursuits sanctioned by the Law as being wholesome, as well as what is permissible behaviour and various kinds of dispensations for all forms of enjoyment once perfection and complete wayfaring have been achieved.

[2:72] *And when you killed a living soul, and disputed thereon*, an allusion to the elucidation of the reason behind the command to sacrifice a cow, which is that a rich old man from among the Children of Israel had a son, a young man, and he was killed by two of his paternal cousins, or others as well, who coveted the inheritance he would have received from his father. They dumped him on the road somewhere between [the dwelling-places of] the [twelve] tribes of the Children of Israel and each denied his murder. The command then came to sacrifice a cow and strike him with parts of her to bring him back to life so that he might inform [them] of his murderer. The young man then is the heart and the son of the spirit who was rich through the wealth of gnoses and wisdoms; his murder was a denial to him of his true life and the removal from him of true love which was his life after being captured by the two faculties of lust and wrath, namely, his two cousins — the animal soul or the totality of its powers. For the spirit and the soul are brothers by virtue of their effusion and birth from the same father, the active intellect, referred to as the Holy Spirit, [if understood] by analogy with what the *ḥadīth* states: ‘Be kind to your aunt, the date-palm, for it was created from the surplus of Adam’s clay’. The animal soul is the aunt of the perfect vegetative soul, if this [latter] is taken to be the aunt of the human soul. They slew him because they coveted the use of the rational meanings and wisdoms — that which constituted his inheritance from his father — to actualise their demands, their perfections and their pleasures by all manner of tricks, strategem and the concocting of ideas. They dumped him on the roads of spiritual and natural powers between where they lie. Their denial to one another of his murder was [the attempt] to transfer every faculty that produces corruption and sin to the other, and [to transfer] righteousness and innocence to itself, because of the mutual struggling and contending [of these powers] with regard to their acts and their pleasures, and [because of] the fact that each of these is veiled behind what suits it and [veiled] from what suits another, as well its deeming its own as righteous while that of its counterpart as corrupt; *and God disclosed what you were hiding*, of the light of the heart and its life by your capture of it.

[2:73] *So We said, ‘Smite him with part of it’*, with its tail or its tongue, according to what is recounted in the story, so that he might come back to life and inform you of the [identity of his] killer. The smiting [of him] with the tail is alludes to rendering the soul dead while keeping alive its weakest and last faculties and that aspect [of it]

that adjoins the vegetative soul and constitutes a link with it, such as the sense of touch, for example, and all of the external senses, namely, its [the cow's] tail. The smiting [of the dead man] with the tongue alludes to the rectification of its character traits and its faculties, while keeping alive its [faculty of] reflection, namely, its tongue. Both of these [smitings] represent two paths: [the first is] the path of spiritual discipline and the mortification of wrath and lust, as is the way of the Sufi, [a path] which is more befitting of those powerful criminal souls of conquest and transgression' [the second is] the path of securing and rectifying character traits, which is the way of the scholars and the sages and which is more befitting of those weak souls and those that are pure and easily-led. They smote him and he rose, the blood gushing forth from his veins, and he informed them of [the identity of] his killers, in other words, he became alive subsisting through true life while the traces of the killing were on him because of his attachment to the body and his being polluted by his demands according to necessity. And he came to know the state of the corporeal powers in preventing him from perceiving and their veiling of him from his light. *Thus God brings to life the dead*, in other words, in the manner of that tremendous bringing back to life does God bring to life those who are dead through their ignorance of true practical life; *and He shows you [His signs]*, His proofs and the signs of His attributes, *so that you might understand*.

[2:74] *Then your hearts became hardened [thereafter]*, in other words, after the duration became prolonged and the languor of the extent of the interval with one variegation (*talwīn*) after another and one attitude after another, your hearts became hardened because of the frequency with which you pursue [this-worldly] matters, corporeal pleasures and being surrounded by ego-centric attributes; *and they are like stones*, that are unaffected by the engravings of knowledge, *or*, something, *even yet harder*, than that, such as iron, for example. He then illustrates how stones are more malleable than these [hearts of theirs], since the state of these [stones] are limited to [one of] the three aspects mentioned. This means that hearts are of four [kinds]: a heart that is illumined by the divine light, obliterated by it, ploughing deep into the sea of knowledge, ensconced in it, so that there gushes forth from it rivers of knowledge, whoever drinks from them lives forever, as is the case with the hearts of the people of God, the foremost [towards God], and this is what is alluded to in His statement: *for there are stones from which rivers come gushing*; [or] a heart that drank from knowledge, learnt and absorbed [it] and people profited from it, as is the case with the hearts of the scholars deeply-rooted in knowledge, and this is what is alluded to in His statement: *and others split so that water issues from them*; [or] a heart that is humble, pliant,

submits and is obedient, as is the case with the hearts of [God's] servants and pious renouncers from among the Muslims, and this is what is alluded to in His statement: *and others come down in fear of God*; . The lowest of its states is that it comes down in fear of God, that is to say, to obey what God has commanded in the way of inclining to the centre compliantly. There then remains that heart which is not affected at all by knowledge and has not been made more pliant by fear, rejecting guidance, arrogant, filled with caprice, and rebellious, such that there is no substance that resembles it, since all [substances] receive what God has commanded: consider how even iron can be made malleable when required. The Prophet said: 'The similitude of the guidance and knowledge with which God has sent me is as the abundant rain that falls on a land, of which one part is wholesome and receives the water and produces plentiful herbage and grass, while another part is subservient, retains the water by which God makes the people profit so that they drink, water and sow; another part on which it falls is a plain that does neither retains water nor produces herbage: that is the similitude of the one who acquires an understanding of religion, learns and acts [by it], and the similitude of the one who does nothing of the sort, rejecting the guidance of God that I have been sent with. Thus did he [the Prophet] illustrate the last three [kinds of] hearts, while the first of the four is the Muḥammadan heart. *And God is not heedless of what you do*: a threat for those with hardened hearts, meaning that God is looking [over them] and veils them from His light and abandons them in their darkneses. The verses that you recite constitute the exoteric aspect of this [interpretation given]; however, [symbolic] interpretation is more appropriate.<sup>21</sup>

[2:75] *Are you then so eager [that they should believe you]*, that they should affirm [His] Oneness by affirming the Unity of the attributes [just] because you have been guided, *seeing there is a party of them [that heard God's word, and then tampered with it]*, [a party them] that accepted God's attributes then distorted these by attributing them to themselves, *after they had comprehended it*, that is, [after] they had acted in accordance with the affirming of the unity of the attributes and what they discovered through eyewitness, *even though they knew*, that those attributes belonged to God, but their souls claimed these for themselves in an [impious] act of partnership [with God] when, at the

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<sup>21</sup> An emendation to the Arabic of most printed editions is proposed here, since as it stands the Arabic makes little sense and there seems to be a typographical error. Read: *wa'l-āyāt allatī tatlūhā zābiruhu wa'l-ta'wīl awlā* (note the transfer of the misplaced definite article in the last two words). This is supported by the fact that Kāshānī has devoted a few passages to the symbolic interpretation of the nature of 'stones' as described by God in an exoteric sense: thus according to Kāshānī, the only way to really understand the Qur'ānic passage is to apply interpretation (*al-ta'wīl awlā*).

point of their overwhelming of the heart, the intellect is heedless, and that is because their affirmation of the Oneness is not by any natural disposition or [spiritual] state but out of knowledge: *so woe to those who write the Scripture with their hands* [Q. 2:79], in other words, woe to the one in whom there subsists the remains of the attributes of the soul while he is unaware of them, or he is aware but then resorts to trickery or does not pay attention to them, so that he does and says through his own soul and its attributes and then imputes it to God in order to earn a share of the shares of the soul, nay indeed, he specifies that statement or deed and its attribution to God as a complete share for it [his soul]: but what a sin [this is] greater than which there is no [other] sin! The first three verses can be interpreted in another sense, based on correspondence (*taṭbīq*),<sup>22</sup> so that one reads: Are you then so eager, O spiritual powers that these ego-centric powers should believe obediently because of your guidance, even as a party of them, such as [the faculties of] estimation and imagination, hear the words of God, that is to say, they seize the meanings that issue forth from God onto the heart and distort them by means of recounting [them]<sup>23</sup> and many transferals and making these [meanings] partial and assigning them the laws pertaining to particulars, as in the context of dreams or incidents,<sup>24</sup> and that, after they had understood these [words of God], that is to say, [after] they had perceived them in their state, even as they were aware of the distortion of these [words] as they are transferred into concomitants, similars and contraries.

[2:76] But when they encounter you upon directing themselves to you and receiving your objects of perception at the moment of your presence and when these [meanings] stand by your side or are ascending, they yield and accept the truth. [*And when they meet those who believe, they say, ‘We believe’*]

*but when they go in private one to another*, at moments of forgetfulness they prevent one another from casting [onto others] what God has disclosed to them in the way of objects of perception that may be sensory, imaginal or estimative, so that they might compose therefrom arguments and dispute with them thereby in the Spiritual Presence before their Lord; [*they say: ‘Do you speak to them of what God has disclosed to you, so that they may thereby dispute with you before your Lord? Have you no understanding?’*].

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<sup>22</sup> This method of interpretation, of finding correspondences between Qur’ānic narrative and spiritual psychology is Kāshānī’s principal hermeneutical approach, one which he applies consistently and persistently throughout his commentary; see Sands 2006, 77.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Chittick 1989, 268 on *ḥikāya*.

<sup>24</sup> ‘Incidents’ constitute true dreams or visions, which in the case of the Prophet heralded his prophethood (cf. Chittick 1989, 404 n.24).

[2:77] *Know they not that God knows what they keep secret*, from you of their objects of perception, *and what they proclaim*, so that He apprises you of this and assists you [to victory] over them?

[2:78] *And there are some of them*, namely, the non-perceiving natural powers and the external senses [*that are illiterate*], *not knowing the Scripture*, the Book of intelligible meanings, *but only as desires*, of their pleasures and lusts, uncertain of how the consequences of these will be sealed or their harmfulness for the path of perfection, nay indeed they conjecture that these will profit them and are good for them; [*and mere conjectures*].

[2:79] [*So woe to those who write the Scripture with their hands then say, 'This is from God' that they may sell it for a small price. So woe to them for what their hands have written, and woe to them for their earnings.*]

[2:80] *And they say, 'the Fire shall not touch us*, to the end [of the verse: *save a number of days*']. *Say: 'Have you taken with God a covenant? God will not fail in His covenant, or say you against God what you do not know?'* They believed that the duration of punishment was commensurate with the duration in which the sin was being committed, not knowing that if the sin constituted a corrupt belief fixed within the soul and a condition deeply-rooted in it so that it becomes a natural disposition, a form of its essence, then it [the sin] becomes a cause for eternal punishment, which is the very meaning of His statement:

[2:81] [*Not so; whoever earns evil and*] *is encompassed by his transgression*, that is, it has complete mastery of him absorbing him as black absorbs [the form of] a dress; were it otherwise, obedience would not have been a cause also for eternal reward [*— those are the inhabitants of the Fire, therein abiding*].

[2:82] [*And those who believe and perform righteous deeds — those are the inhabitants of Paradise, therein abiding*].

[2:83] *And when We made a covenant with the Children of Israel*, We made a covenant with them concerning the affirmation of [Our] Oneness, the requirement of which is the observing of the Lordly Presence and the witnessing of its self-disclosures in their loci, as well as the fulfilment of what is due to it in accordance with what is manifested of its descriptions. The first to bear the manifestation and vestiges of the lordly attributes outwardly and in the world of the witnessing are the parents on account of their being the source of lineage, their rearing and their affection, all of which are the vestiges of the Existentiator, the Merciful Lord within them for that [child]. For, goodness towards them must follow from the worship of God in accordance with the

manifestation of that [goodness] within them as loci [of that manifestation]; then come the near of kin because of the manifestation of mutual kindness and divine mercy within them in relation to that [child]; then come the orphans because of the fact that His guardianship and preservation is singled out for them above all others, since He is the Guardian of those who have none; then come the needy because of the fact that He takes upon Himself to look after them and provide for them without any intermediary other than Him; then come all other people because of the mutual mercifulness between them that which is the shadow of [the Divine] Mercifulness [on earth]. Thus the goodness enjoined in this verse, in all of its degrees and various levels of merit, is the specification of worship for God coupled with the witnessing of His attributes in their loci of manifestation and the fulfilment of what is due to the self-disclosures and rulings of these [attributes].

[‘*You shall not worship any other than God; and to be good to parents, and the near of kin; and to orphans, and to the needy; and speak well to men; and observe prayer and pay the alms’, then you turned away; all but a few of you, rejecting*]

[2:84] *And when We made a covenant with you: ‘Do not shed your own blood*, by desiring the abodes and attributes of the soul and by inclining towards its caprices and natures, while abandoning your true life and the specific qualities of your acts for the sake of securing its goals and pleasures; *neither expel your selves*, your essences since the essence is represented by the self, *from your habitations’*, that is, from your spiritual abodes and the holy gardens. *Then you confirmed it*, by accepting that [covenant], *and you bore witness*, to it through your initial states of preparedness and your primordial intellects.

[2:85] *Then there you are those very [ones]*, [those] who have fallen from the primordial nature and who are veiled from the original light of preparedness, *killing yourselves*, as a result of your succumbing to temptation and pursuit of caprice, *and expelling a party of you from their habitations*, their original eternal domiciles by tempting them, misguiding them and inciting them to the commission of acts of disobedience and the pursuit of caprice, *conspiring against them*, assisting one another against them, *in sin*, by committing lewd acts and acts of disobedience so that they might see you and follow suit, *and enmity*, and overbearingness against people so that your insolence might pass on to them, and in your binding them to the despicable acts of the bestial and predatorial faculties and your inciting them to such [acts] and your adorning these for them, as is the custom of the heretics among the Muslims of those who permit the impermissible and allege that they affirm the Oneness of God; *and if they come to you as captives*, shackled by the consequences of acts they have committed and the disgrace of

their vile acts, you become regretful; and their intellect and the intellect of the offspring of their kind rebukes them for the shame and ignominy that has befallen them; *you ransom them*, with the words of wisdom, admonition and counsel that prove that the highest pleasures are the intellectual and spiritual ones; and that the consequence of following caprice and the soul and Satan is an evil one, and that to act like beasts and wild animals is reprehensible and base, so that they might then awaken by these [words] and rid themselves of the fetters of caprice for a little while, as we observe in the case of the foreign infidels who allege knowledge of God's Oneness, gnosis and wisdom together with those who follow them in this day and age; [*yet their expulsion was forbidden you*].

*What, do you believe in part of the Book*, that is, the Book of the Intellect and the Law in word and [by your own] affirmation, so that you affirm It and believe in its truth, namely, that the pursuit of caprice and the soul is reprehensible and necessarily brings about perdition, destruction and loss; *and disbelieve in part*, in deed and in [your failure to] act by it, so that you do not refrain from what It has prohibited you, namely, your deeming permissible and wholesome the violation of what is sacrosanct and that which is forbidden? *What then shall be the requital of those of you who do that, but degradation*, disgrace and humiliation, *in the life of this world; and on the Day of Resurrection*, that is, upon separation, which is the minor resurrection, *to be returned to the most terrible of chastisement*, which is their chastisement through those dark miens that are deeply-embedded within their souls and their being consumed by the fires of these [miens], or [chastisement] by their being totally transfigured from their forms and the doubling of their affliction? *And God is not heedless of what you do*, of your deeds, for He has kept count of them and registered them within your souls and recorded them against you, as He says: *The Day when God will raise them, He will then inform them of what they did. God has kept count of it, while they forgot it* [Q. 58:6].

[2:86] [*Those are the ones who have purchased the life of this world at the price of the Hereafter — for them the punishment shall not be lightened, neither shall they be helped.*]

[2:87] *And verily We gave Moses the Scripture*, to where He says *as though they did not know* [Q. 2:101] ...<sup>25</sup>

[*and after him We sent successive messengers, and We gave Jesus son of Mary the clear proofs, and We confirmed him with the Holy Spirit, and whenever there came to you a messenger, with what your souls did not desire, you became arrogant; and some, you called liars, and some you slay?*]

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<sup>25</sup> Kāshānī's commentary resumes at verse 101 further below.

[2:88] *And they say: 'Our hearts are encased'. Nay, but God has cursed them for their unbelief; and little will they believe.*

[2:89] *When there came to them a Book from God, confirming what was with them — and they formerly prayed for victory over the disbelievers; but when there came to them what they recognised, they disbelieved in it; and the curse of God is on the disbelievers.*

[2:90] *Evil is that for which they sell their souls; that they disbelieve in that which God has revealed, grudging that God should reveal of His bounty to whomever He will of His servants; and they were laden with anger upon anger; and for the disbelievers there shall be a humiliating chastisement.*

[2:91] *And when it was said to them, 'Believe in what God has revealed', they said, 'We believe in what was revealed to us', and they disbelieve in what is beyond that; yet it is the truth, confirming what is with them. Say: 'Why then were you slaying the prophets of God formerly, if you were believers?'*

[2:92] *And Moses came to you with clear proofs; then you took to yourselves the calf after him, and you were evildoers.*

[2:93] *And when We made a covenant with you, and raised over you the Mount, 'Take forcefully what We have given you, and listen', they said, 'We hear and disobey'; and they were made to drink the calf in their hearts on account of their unbelief. Say: 'Evil is that which your belief enjoins on you, if you are believers'.*

[2:94] *Say: 'If the Abode of the Hereafter with God is purely yours, and not for other people, then long for death — if you speak truly'.*

[2:95] *But they will never long for it, because of that which their own hands have sent before them. God knows the evildoers.*

[2:96] *And you shall find them the people most covetous of life, and the idolaters; any one of them would love that he might be given life for a thousand years; yet, his being given life shall not budge him from the chastisement. God sees what they do.*

[2:97] *Say: 'Whoever is an enemy to Gabriel — he it was that brought it down upon your heart by the leave of God, confirming what was before it, a guidance, and good tidings for the believers.*

[2:98] *Whoever is an enemy to God and His angels and His messengers, and Gabriel and Michael — then surely God is an enemy to the disbelievers'.*

[2:99] *And We have revealed to you clear proofs; and none disbelieves in them except the wicked.*



[2:100] *Why, whenever they make a covenant, does a party of them reject it? Nay, but most of them are disbelievers.*

[2:101] *When there came to them a messenger from God, confirming what was with them, a party of them who were given the Scripture have cast away the Scripture of God behind their backs, as though they did not know.*

This is manifest [in meaning] and can be known from what has already been [mentioned in previous verses]. The exoteric sense is that Gabriel is the active intellect, Michael is the spirit of the sixth celestial sphere, from his intellect emanates the universal vegetative soul charged with the provision of [God's] servants; Isrāfīl is the spirit of the fourth celestial sphere, from his intellect emanates the universal animal soul that is in charge of the animals; 'Izrā'īl is the spirit of the seventh celestial sphere and he is in charge of all human spirits which he seizes by himself or through intermediaries who are his assistants whereupon he hands them over to God, exalted be He.

[2:102] *And they follow*, that is, the Jews and the spiritual faculties follow, *what the devils*, the devils of mankind who are the evil disobedient powerful rebels and the devils of the jinn who are the illusions, images and imaginations that are veiled from the light of the spirit that disobeys the command of the intellect and rebels against obedience of the heart, *used to relate in*, the time of, *Solomon's kingdom*: [Solomon] the prophet, or Solomon of the spirit, from the books and sciences of sorcery, claiming that this was the knowledge by which Solomon seized kingship and [by which] he subjugated to his service those jinn, humans and birds, as well as the science of trickery, magic, illusions, play-acting and sophistry. *Solomon did not disbelieve*, by attributing the effects [of such devices] to any other than God, since sorcery is disbelief and a veiling from the effect-creation of God by the attribution of effect to other than Him; *but the devils disbelieved*, they became veiled and were not aware that there is no Effect other than God; *teaching the people sorcery; and that which was revealed to the two angels*, namely, the speculative intellect and the practical [one] that incline to the soul, degenerates of the well of nature because of their orientation to it through the soul's enticement of them to it, *in Babylon*, of the breast [— *Hārūt and Mārūt*], chastised the two of them by the narrowness of the place between the moistures of the substrata and the fumes of the fires of lust in the way of sciences and deeds in the form of trickery, cartomancy and talismans according to both interpretations. *They taught not any man, without them saying, 'We are but a temptation*, a test and a trial from God of the power of luminosity and the subsistence of the spiritual [angelic] world within the two [angels], so that they might be alerted to their state by the light of the intellect; *do not disbelieve'*, by employing such science for corrupt purposes and [to commit] what is prohibited and

attributing to it the effects. *From them they learned how they might cause division between [a man and his wife], [between] the heart and the soul and between the spirit and the soul and the sully of the heart; yet they did not harm any man thereby save by the leave of God*, in other words, except if God willed that he be harmed after that act and does what He wishes so that this ends up being a further trial for the sorcerer and a respite to him in his disbelief and his being veiled since he considers that to be the effects of his sorcery [and not from God]; *and they learned what harmed them*, by increasing their [state of] being veiled and the intensity of deviation and caprice; *and did not profit them*, by the lifting of the veil upon their seeing that this was a trial from God and their seeking refuge with God so that He might protect them from its evil. *And surely they knew well that whoever buys it, he shall have no share in the Hereafter*, that is, [he shall have no] portion for his total concern with the soul and caprice, and his use of that to earn the [temporary] enjoyments and transient things of this world. *[evil then would have been that they sold themselves for, if they had but known]*.

[2:103] *Yet if only they had believed*, in seeing the acts as issuing from God, *and been fearful*, of associating others with God by attributing effects to other than Him, *verily, a reward*, everlasting and being, *from God*, from the spiritual lights and the opening bestowals and the states of the heart and the divine cognitions, *would have been better, if they had but known*.

[2:104] *O you who believe, do not say, 'Observe us'; but say, 'Regard us', and give ear; and for disbelievers awaits a painful chastisement*.

[2:105] *Those disbelievers of the People of the Scripture and the idolaters, do not wish that any good should be revealed to you from your Lord, but God singles out for His mercy, whom He will; God is of bounty abounding*.

[2:106] *And whatever verse We abrogate*, by invalidating its ruling but retaining it in form, *or postpone*, and take it away from your heart by removing its formulation and signification, or its formulation but not its signification, such as the stoning verse,<sup>26</sup> *We bring [in place] a better one*, that is, [We bring in place of it] what is more beneficial than it in that context or is equivalent to it in terms of good or benefit. Know that the laws fixed in the Preserved Tablet are either specific or general: the specific are either specific to individuals or specific to a time-period. If it is then revealed to the heart of the Messenger, the one specific to individuals remains as long as those

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<sup>26</sup> This is a case where a Qur'anic revelation no longer forms part of the *textus receptus*, the redacted 'Uthmānic text, but whose ruling is still applied: see R. Peters, 'zinā', *EI2*, XI, 508 and Dmitry V. Frolov, 'stoning', *EQ*, V, 129.

individuals remain, while the one that is specific to certain periods of time is abrogated and removed upon the passing of that period of time, be it brief as in the case of the abrogated verses of the Qurʾān, or lengthy as in the case of the aforesaid stipulations of the Law. None of that contradicts their being fixed in the Tablet since that is their status in it. As for the general ones, these remain for all time, such as human speech or his upright posture, for example; [*or the like of it; do you not know that God has power over all things?*]

[2:107] *Do you not know that to God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and the earth*, that is to say, to Him belongs the kingdom of the heavens of the world of spirits and the earth of bodies, and He disposes of them by the hand of His power, nay indeed, by His totality, the hidden and the manifest of it, so that there remains no one other than Him to assist you [to victory] and to be your Guardian: [*and that you have none, besides God, neither protector, nor helper?*]

[2:108] *Or do you desire to demand of your Messenger*, beforehand sensory religious pleasures and vile lusts of the soul, *as was demanded of Moses aforetime? Whoever exchanges [belief for unbelief], light for darkness, has surely strayed from the even way.*

[2:109] [*Many of the People of the Scripture long that they might make you disbelievers, after you have believed, from the envy of their own souls, after the truth has become clear to them; yet pardon and be forgiving till God brings His command; truly God has power over all things.*]

[2:110] *And perform the prayer, and pay the alms; whatever good you shall offer for your own souls, you shall find it with God; assuredly God sees what you do*].

[2:111] *And they say, 'None shall enter the Garden except those who are Jews or Christians'*, that is to say, the Jews said that none shall enter the Garden promised to them in the covenant, that is, the exoteric Garden and the world of the kingdom, which is the Garden of the acts and the Garden of the soul, except those who were Jews; while the Christians said that none shall enter the Garden promised to them in [their] covenant, that is, the esoteric Garden and the world of the angelic realm, which is the Garden of the attributes and the Garden of the heart except those who were Christians, which is why Jesus, peace be upon him, said, when calling them to their Garden: 'Whoever is not born again and his call is not directed towards the heaven, that is, the spiritual heaven, shall not probe the angelic realm of the heavens'. *Such are their desires*, that is, the utmost extent of their demands, at the limits of which they stopped, veiling themselves therewith from what is above them. *Say, 'Produce your proof*, that is, the evidence that demonstrates all except you are denied entry into your Garden, *if you*

*speaking truth*', concerning what you claim, nay, all evidence points to the contrary of what you claim.

[2:112] *Nay, but, whoever submits his purpose*, that is, his essence as it exists with the totality of its concomitants and accidents, *to God*, through essential affirmation of the Oneness upon total effacement and annihilation in the Essence of God, *being virtuous*, that is, upright in his states through subsistence after annihilation, witnessing his Lord in his actions, returning from the essential witnessing to the station of virtue of attributes which is to witness the place of uprightness and worship through the Existence of the Truth and not through the ego-centric soul, *his reward is with his Lord*, namely, the Garden that you have mentioned but purer and more delightful because it is specific to the station [divine] witness (*indiyya*),<sup>27</sup> that is, the witnessing which they have been veiled from, *and no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve*, that is, and more in addition to the Garden that will be yours and that is that they shall not fear the veiling of the essence and the subsistence of the soul that is the concomitant of the existence of what remains of them, and that they shall not grieve for what has eluded them because of their having stopped at the veil of the Garden of the acts and the attributes and the delighting in it and the resting therein and being there forever instead of the presential vision of the beauty of the Essence, for even if they abandon it out of yearning for the self-disclosure of the Essence, they shall still have it [that Garden], their lowest station being below the Garden of the Essence.

[2:113] *The Jews say, 'The Christians have nothing'*, because of their being veiled by their religion from their [the Jews'] religion; likewise say the Christians because of their being veiled by the esoteric aspect from the exoteric one, as the Jews are veiled from the esoteric aspect by the exoteric one, which is the situation today with the various schools of Islam; *and the Christians say, 'The Jews stand on nothing'; yet they recite the Scripture*, which contains what would guide them to the removal of that veil and seeing the truth of every religion and [every] dogmatic school, for the truth of the people of that religion or school is not false since they adhere to those beliefs: otherwise what is the difference between them and those who have neither knowledge nor scripture, as is the case with the polytheists, for what these [latter] say is the same as what the former say, nay they [the polytheists] are less blameworthy since there is only the proof of the intellect against them, while the others have both the proofs of the intellect and those of the Law. [*Thus, the ignorant say the like of what these say*]; *God shall decide between them regarding their differences*, [He shall decide between them] with the truth

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<sup>27</sup> On this concept, see Chittick 1989: 301-2.

concerning their differences, *on the Day of*, the event of the major, *Resurrection*, and the manifestation of the Essential Unity upon the emergence of the Messiah (*al-Mahdī*), peace be upon him. According to *ḥadīth* it is that God will disclose Himself to His servants in the form of their belief and they will know Him, whereupon He will transform Himself from that form to another form and they will not know Him: thereupon they will all be misguided and veiled, except what God wills; and He is the One whose Oneness is affirmed but who is not tied to the form of His belief.

[2:114] *And who is more unjust*, that is, who receives less of what is due to him and is worse off in his share, *than he who bars God's places of worship*, that is, the prostration places of God, namely, the hearts, in which He can be known and where the prostration is performed through essence-annihilation, *so that His Name be not invoked in them*, [His] special [Name] that is the Greatest Name for He only discloses Himself with that Name in the heart, this being the self-disclosure of the Essence with the totality of the attributes; or It is that Name of His that is specified by every one of these [attributes], in other words, the perfection that befits the preparedness which It entails; *and strives to ruin them?*, to sully them with cold fanaticism and with the triumph and mastery of desires over them and the prevention of the folk of these [mosques] who possess the preparedness above such [desires] by means of confusion and turmoil and the incitement of seditions that are the concomitants of the mutual attraction between the faculties of the soul and satanic motives and illusions; *such men might never enter them, save in fear*, [nor] arrive at them, [save in fear], in other words, [save] broken by the self-disclosure of the Truth in them; *for them in this world there is degradation*, that is, disgrace and humiliation because of the manifestation of the falsehood of their religion and their beliefs, which will be nullified by the religion of the Truth, and by their vanquishing and their distress and their having been overpowered; *and in the Hereafter there shall be a mighty chastisement*, which is that they will be veiled from the Truth by their [false] religion.

[2:115] *And to God belong[s] the east*, that is, the realm of light and manifestation, which is the paradise of the Christians and their prayer direction, and is, in reality, His esoteric aspect; *and the west*, that is, the realm of darkness and concealment, which is the Paradise of the Jews and their prayer direction, and is, in reality, His exoteric aspect *whithersoever you turn*, that is, in whichever direction you turn outwardly and inwardly, *then there is the face of God*, that is, the Essence of God self-disclosed through the totality of His attributes. Or [it means] to God belongs the illumination of your hearts by [His] manifestation in them and [His] self-disclosure to them through the attribute of His beauty in the state of your presential vision and your annihilation [therein]; and

[that to God belongs] the alienation in them through His self-covering and His self-veiling in their [your hearts'] forms and essences, and through His self-concealment by the attribute of His majesty in the state of your subsistence after annihilation. Thus, in whichever direction you turn, then there is His face, with no thing there except Him alone. *Lo! God is Embracing*, of the totality of existence, comprehending all directions and existences, *Knowing*, of all knowledge and knowables.

[2:116] *And they say, 'God has taken to Himself a son'*, meaning that He brought into existence an existentiator independent by his own essence and specified to the exclusion of Him. *Glory be to Him!*, we declare His transcending of that any other than Him can be something, let alone be similar to Him. *Nay, to Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth*, that is, to Him belong the world of spirits and bodies, being His esoteric and exoteric aspects [respectively], similar to when you say that He possesses essence, countenance and attributes and the like; *all obey His will*, existing by His existence, acting by His act, non-existing in their own essences: that is the ultimate in obedience and in fulfilling what is due to Him, since He is absolute existence, so that without Him nothing exists. Existences that are designated by His attributes and His names, distinguished as they are by their very entification [sc. being entities] — that which is a contingent and nonexistent quality — are not Him, if considered on the basis of reason — which would classify these as [having true] existence. For quiddity that has no existence is not a thing externally but, in terms of the intellect and intelligibles, constitutes His inner aspect (*bāṭinuhu*); in reality that [quiddity] is nothing but Him and so anything other than Him cannot exist to then be [His] son, in other words, a caused or created thing or whatever else you wish to call it.

[2:117] *Originator of the heavens and the earth*, that is, originating His heavens and earth without there being any preceding substratum or period of time, nay, they are shadows of His essence and the origination point of His knowledge, illumined by His luminous name, existing by His external existence. Were it not for the aspect of contingency and rational consideration as per things known with certainty, their existences would not be [existences] in the first place, since without Him they are nothing. Thus they exist with Him not relatively [speaking] but through the verification of His existence and they cannot be other than Him through separation but by rational consideration, for on the basis of their being entities they are created things and on the basis of their reality they are true; *and when He decrees a thing*, that is, He rules that it be, *He but says to it 'Be', and it is*, in other words, all that is needed is the connection between that [thing] and His will and it comes into existence, without the intrusion of time or the mediation of a thing, nay, [it comes into existence] together

[with His will]. That connection is His statement [‘Be’], for otherwise there would be no words and no sound.

[2:118] *And those, polytheists, without knowledge, of His Oneness, say, ‘Why does God not speak to us?; Why does a sign not come to us?’ So, spoke those before them, the like of what they say; their hearts are much alike, in terms of [their] ignorance of [His] Oneness and the words of God and His signs, since knowledge of these is a branch of the knowledge of [His] Oneness. Yet We have made clear [the signs], the proofs of Oneness and the modality of communion [with God], to a people who are certain.*

[2:119] *We have sent you with the truth, a bearer of good tidings, and warner. You shall not be asked about the inhabitants of Hell-fire, that is to say, you will not be accountable for their being veiled and it is not your concern to save them from the darkneses of their veils, but your duty is to summon them [to religion] through good tidings and warnings.*

[2:120] *[Never will the Jews be pleased with you, neither the Christians, not until you follow their creed,] Say: ‘God’s guidance is the true guidance’, that is to say, the path of Oneness that is specifically qualified by truth is the path and none other, as [Imam] ‘Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, said: ‘Right and left lead astray, only the middle path [in-between] is the [true] route’. And if you were to follow their whims, after the knowledge that has come to you, that is, the knowledge of Oneness and gnosis, you shall have against God neither friend, nor helper, because of the impossibility of there existing any other than Him.*

[2:121] *[Those to whom We have given the Scripture, and who recite it with true recitation, they believe in it; and whoever disbelieves in it, they shall be the losers.*

[2:122] *O Children of Israel, remember My favour wherewith I favoured you, and that I have preferred you over all the worlds.*

[2:123] *And beware of a day when no soul shall for another be requited, and no compensation shall be accepted from it, nor any intercession shall benefit it, neither shall they be helped.]*

[2:124] *And when his Lord tested Abraham with certain words, that is, with the levels of spiritual concepts such as the heart, mysteries, the spirit, the hidden, Oneness, the states and the stations that are used to articulate these levels, such as submission, reliance, satisfaction and the sciences of these [levels], and he fulfilled them, by wayfaring to God and in God up to annihilation. He said, ‘I am making you for the people a leader’, through subsistence after annihilation and the return from the Truth to creatures, to lead them and guide them how to wayfare to Me so that they follow*

your lead and become guided. *Said he, 'And of my seed?'*, in other words, and also make some of my descendants leaders. *He said*, some of them could be evildoers and *'My covenant shall not reach the evildoers'*, that is, they shall not be My viceregents and I shall not promise leadership to evildoers.

[2:125] *And when We appointed the House, of the heart, to be a place of visitation*, a place of return and a place of settlement, *for the people, and a sanctuary*, a place of security or a cause for security and safety for them in which they shall feel secure and at peace upon their arrival there from the dangers of the attributes of the soul and [from] the havoc of the destructive and corruptive faculties of nature, and [from] the conjurings of the satans of illusion and imagination and their seductions and devices. *'Take to yourselves Abraham's station*, which is the station of the spirit and the station of friendship, *as a place of prayer'*, a place for true prayer which is the witnessing and the divine union and the friendship of the tasting; *and We made a covenant with Abraham and Ishmael, 'Purify My House*, We commanded them to purify the House of the heart from the defilements of the conversations of the soul and the impurities of the evil whisperings of Satan and the filth of the motivations of caprice and the dirt of the attributes of the faculties, *for those that shall go round it*, that is, for the yearning wayfarers who go round the heart during their journey, *and those that cleave to it*, those who have arrived at the station of the heart through that reliance that is the affirmation of the unity of the acts, those who reside therein without the variegations of the soul that could drive [them] away from it, *to those who bow*, that is, those who have submitted, who have reached the station of the self-disclosure of the attributes and the perfect level of satisfaction, *and those who prostrate themselves'*, those annihilated in the Oneness.

[2:126] *And when Abraham said, 'My Lord, make this*, breast that is the sanctuary of the heart, *a land secure*, for its people from the domination of the attributes of the soul and the seizing accursed enemy [Satan] and the snatch of the jinn of the corporeal faculties, *and provide its people with fruits*, the fruits of the gnoses of the spirit or its wisdoms and lights, *such of them as believe in God and the Last Day'*, such of them as affirm the Oneness of God and know [the truth of] the final return. *He said, 'And whoever disbelieves*, that is, whoever veils himself also from among those who have inhabited the breast but do not transgress its limits to rise to the station of the eye because of their being veiled by knowledge whose receptacle is the breast, *to him I shall give a little enjoyment*, of intelligible meanings and universal knowables that come down to them from the world of the spirit in the measure that suffices them to live by, *then I shall compel him to the chastisement of the Fire*, of privation and veiling — *how evil a*



*journey's end!*', shall be their journey's end chastised as they shall be by their deficiency and the pain of privation.

[2:127] *And when Abraham raised up the foundations of the House:* it is said that the Ka'ba was brought down from the heaven at the time of Adam, having two doors, [one] to the east and [one] to the west. So Adam made the pilgrimage from India and was greeted [there] by [a host of] angels 40 parasangs deep. He performed circumambulations of the House and entered into it. It was then raised [back to the heaven] at the time of Noah's flood, peace be upon him, and was then brought back down another time at the time of Abraham, may God's blessings be upon him; he visited it [the Ka'ba] and raised up its foundations and [re-]made its two doors a single door. It is said that [Mount] Abū Qubays shook violently and became split off from the Black Stone, which was a white ruby from the rubies of Paradise that Gabriel had brought down; it had been hidden away for him [Abraham] from the time of the flood until the time of Abraham, peace be upon him, who then placed it in its place [in the Ka'ba]. It became black from the touch over time of menstruating women. Thus, its [the Ka'ba's] coming down at the time of Adam is an allusion to the manifestation of the heart during his time by virtue of his being upon it [the heart]; its having two doors, a western and an eastern one is an allusion to the manifestation of the knowledge of the origin and the final return and the spiritual knowledge concerning the world of light and the world of darkness during his time but not knowledge of the Oneness. His [Adam's] setting out to visit it from India is an allusion to his heading off, by virtue of engenderment and equilibrium, from the world of dark corporeal nature to the station of the heart. The reception [of him] by the angels is an allusion to the attachment of the animal and vegetative faculties to the body and the manifestation of the effects of these [faculties] in it before the the effects of the heart during the forty days in which his build was being engendered and his clay was fermenting; or [it is an allusion] to his heading off to journey and to wayfare from the world of the soul of darkness to the station of the heart, with the reception of the angels being his reception of the ego-centric and corporeal faculties by accepting obedience and the beautiful character traits and excellent natural disposition, becoming accustomed to them by moving between stations until his arrival at the station of the heart. His circumambulation of the House is an allusion to his arrival at the station of the heart and his wayfaring therein through variegation; his entry [into it] is an allusion to his becoming stable<sup>28</sup> and upright in it [the heart]; its being raised to the heaven at the time of the flood is an allusion to

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<sup>28</sup> On the importance and place of 'stability' (*tamkīn*), with reference to the heart, as a station, which according to Ibn 'Arabī is higher than 'variegation' (*talwīn*), see Chittick 1989:108.

people's being veiled by the overwhelming of caprice and the flood of ignorance during the time of Noah, peace be upon him, from the station of the heart; its remaining in the fourth heaven, that is, the Frequented House [cf. Q. 52:4] which is the heart of the world, and its coming down another time during the time of Abraham, peace be upon him, is an allusion to people's becoming guided during his time to the station of heart through his guidance; Abraham's raising of its foundations and assigning it a single door is an allusion to the heart's receiving on account of his wayfaring, peace be upon him, from his station to the station of the spirit, that which constitutes the mystery; the rising of his levels and his arrival at the station of Oneness, given that he was the first to manifest affirmation of the Essential Oneness — as he himself said: *Verily I have turned my face to Him Who originated the heavens and the earth, a ḥanīf, and I am not of those who associate [others with God]* [Q. 6:79]. The Black Stone is an allusion to the Spirit; the violent shaking of Abū Qubays and its being rent from it is an allusion to his becoming manifest through spiritual discipline and the movement of the limbs of the body when employed in reflection and worship demanding to become manifest, which is why it was said to have been hidden in it [the mountain], that is, it was veiled by the body; the blackening of it [the Stone] on account of the frequent touch of menstruating women is an allusion to its become concealed and sullied by the ego-centric faculties' overpowering and mastery of the heart and their blackening of the luminous face that adjoins the spirit; *and Ishmael with him*, he was also one who affirmed the Oneness because of his mention as a [syntactical] supplement [to Abraham] with regard to the raising of the House's foundations. [*Our Lord! Receive this from us. Truly You are the Hearing, the Knowing.*]

[2:128] *Our Lord! And make us submissive to You*, that is, do not assign us to our own selves so that we might submit by our selves, but [that] we should submit [to You] through You and by Your making; [*and, of our seed, a community submissive to You; and show us our holy rites, and relent to us. Surely You are the Relenting, the Merciful.*]

[2:129] *Our Lord! And send among them a messenger*, namely, Muḥammad, may God's blessings and peace be upon him, which is why he [Muḥammad] said: 'I am [the answer to] the supplication of my father Abraham, and the good tidings of Jesus and the vision of my mother — for she had seen in her sleep that a light was shining forth from her that illumined for her the palaces of Syria; [*one of them, who shall recite to them Your signs, and teach them the Book and Wisdom, and purify them; You are the Mighty, the Wise.*]

[2:130] *Who therefore shrinks from the religion of Abraham*, that is, the religion of the affirmation of [God's] Oneness, *except he who fools himself?*, except he who veils himself

totally from the light of the intellect, remaining in the station of his soul's darkness, in other words, being foolish in himself (*safīha nafsan*), [if read syntactically] as a specification, or *safīha fī nafsihi*, with the removal of the genitive-case preposition [fī].<sup>29</sup> *Indeed We chose him in this world*, that is to say, the one who is from among the beloved, destined pre-eternally for precedence (*sābiqa*), We select him upon his annihilation in the Oneness, *and in the Hereafter*, that is, in the state of subsistence after annihilation, *he shall be [among the righteous]*, among the people of uprightness, those who are good for the government of the [cosmic] Order and the perfection of the species.

[2:131] *When his Lord said to him, 'Submit'*, that is to say, declare God's Oneness and submit your essence to God: in other words, He assigned him a place among the people of the first row from pre-eternity, a muslim, a monotheist, obedient to the Lord of the Worlds, annihilated in Him; [*he said, 'I have submitted to the Lord of the Worlds'.*]

[2:132] *And Abraham enjoined upon his sons this*, declaration of the Oneness, *and [so did] Jacob*, upon his sons in [his] grief, *'My sons, God has chosen for you the [true] religion*, that is, His religion by which the one who believes in God's Oneness worships, having no other religion or essence besides it, so that his religion is God's religion and his essence is God's Essence: *see that you die not [save in submission]*, except upon this religion, in other words, do not die a natural death, the death of ignorance, but be dead in your souls, alive in God forever, so that when the death of the body overcomes you, you will be in that state [of submission].

[2:133] [*Or, were you witnesses when death came to Jacob? When he said to his sons, 'What will you worship after me?' They said, 'We will worship your God and the God of your fathers Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac, One God, to Him we submit'.*]

[2:134] *That is a community that has passed away*: in other words, do not be followers of authority (*muqallid*) and do not be satisfied purely with following authority in terms of religion, for there can be no reliance on transmission since no one possesses but what he has acquired of knowledge, of deeds, of beliefs and behaviour; [*theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned; you shall not be asked about what they*

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<sup>29</sup> Some early grammarians understood the phrase as *safīha fī nafsihi*, but because the preposition *fī* has been elided, the accusative (*nafṣahu*) is read: cf. Bayḍāwī, *Anwār al-Tanzīl*: commentary to Q. 2:130. An analogous case is the expression *alima ra'ṣabu*, 'his head hurt', where *ra'ṣabu* is the actual subject but takes the accusative in this case because of the grammatical requirement arising from the specification coming after the verb.

*did*]: no one is required for the beliefs of another nor for another's deeds. So exercise your insight and ask for certainty and act in that way.

[2:135] *And they say, 'Be Jews or Christians [and you shall be guided]'*: every person who is veiled by his religion claims that his religion and none other is the truth. *Say, 'Nay, rather the creed of Abraham [a ḥanīf; and he was not of the idolaters]'*, for absolute guidance is the affirmation of God's Oneness which comprehends every religion and lifts every veil, as He says next in His statement:

[2:136] *Say: 'We believe in God, to the end of this [statement: and in that which has been revealed to us, and revealed to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, and the Tribes, and that which was given to Moses, and Jesus, and the prophets, from their Lord]*

*We make no division between any of them, by denying the religion of some of them or deeming false their creed, while affirming that of others and their truthfulness; nay, we believe that they have all covered upon the truth and agreed about the Oneness of God; we accept all of these religions on the basis of the [belief in the] Oneness that comprehends all of them; [and to Him we submit].'*

[2:137] *And if they believe in the like of what you believe in, of the Oneness of God that unites [all], of every religion and dogma, then they are truly guided, an absolute guidance, that is, total guidance; but if they turn away, then they are [clearly in schism], apart from religion and split from guidance, causing trouble for you in it. [God will suffice you against them; He is the Hearer, the Knower.]*

[2:138] *The mark of God, that is, we believe in God and He has marked us with a [particular] mark. Every adherent of a belief or a creed is marked inwardly by the mark of his belief, religion or creed. The adherents of the different creeds are all marked by the mark of their intentions; the adherents of schools of thought [are marked] by the mark of their imam and leader; the philosophers by the mark of their intellects; the various heretics and the innovators [are marked] by the mark of their heresies and souls, while the affirmers of God's Oneness [are marked] specifically by the mark of God, better than which there is no mark and beyond which there can be no other mark, as the Messenger of God said: 'Verily God created [His] creatures in darkness, then sprinkled upon them of His light and whoever was touched by that light was guided and whoever it missed went astray: that light then is His mark; [and who has a better mark than God? And Him we worship.]*

[2:139] [*Say: 'Would you then dispute with us concerning God, and He is our Lord and your Lord? Our deeds belong to us, and to you belong your deeds, and to Him we are sincerely devoted'.*

[2:140] *Or do you say: 'Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac and Jacob, and the Tribes — they were Jews, or they were Christians?' Say: 'Have you then greater knowledge, or has God? And who does greater injustice than he who conceals a testimony received from God? And God is not heedless of what you do'.*

[2:141] *That is a community that has passed away; theirs is what they have earned, and yours is what you have earned; you shall not be asked about what they did.]*

[2:142] *The fools among the people will say:* He has called them fools, of slight intellect, because of the failure of their intellects to be true [to their nature] by perceiving the truth of the religion of Islam, and to fulfill this [truth] in accordance with what they knew to be the due of this school and to stop at this [religion]. That is why their dispute concerned God, despite their according with [the principle of] God's Oneness and the singling out of Muslims for singular devotion [to God]. For were they to perceive the truth they would perceive their singular devotion and they would no longer dispute. Were their intellects composed, they would have inferred from signs and perceived what is due to every religion and school of thought, and would have distinguished between that religion of truth [Islam], which is like the spirit in comparison, and the falsehood promoted by its adherents, [falsehood] with which has the religion of Islam has become mixed and draped itself. For it [Islam] is all truth, nay, it is the truth of all truths, which is why they [Muslims] were appointed as a midmost community, that is, a balance between all communities, meritorious over them and witnesses against them. *'What has turned them from the direction they were facing in their prayers formerly?'*, [they said that] because they were restricted to a specific direction and so they could only accept something restrictive, not knowing the Oneness that accommodates all directions. *Say: 'To God belong the east and the west,* [to be understood] as has been mentioned according to the two interpretations. *He guides whomever He will to a straight path'*, that is, the path of Oneness in relation to which all directions are the same by virtue of the fact that the Truth to which all is directed is not in any direction and that all directions are contained in Him, through Him and to Him, as He has said: *Whithersoever you turn, there is the face of God* [Q. 2:115].

[2:143] [*Thus, We appointed you a midmost community that you might be witnesses to the people; and that the Messenger might be a witness to you*] The meaning of their being witnesses to the people and of the Messenger's being a witness to them is that they will behold, through the light of Oneness, the dues of religions and will come to know the dues [incumbent] upon the followers of every religion and the due upon every religious person in terms of his [particular] religion, as well as the falsehood that is not the due of [any of] these [religions] but the inventions and desires of their souls, the

mendacities of their traditions, their concoctions and their stopping short at their religion and their deeming false all other religions, and their veiling and confining themselves to the exoteric aspect [of their religion] without penetrating deeply its esoteric [dimension] and fundament. For otherwise they would have known the authenticity of Islam, as the path of truth is one, and would not have concealed themselves behind the truths all [other] religions; especially the religion of Islam which is the greatest and most manifest truth. The Messenger beholds the [spiritual] rank of every religious person in relation to that religion of his and the truth of his religion which he follows, as well as the veil by which he veils himself from the perfection of his religion. Thus he [the Messenger] is aware of their sins and the limits of their faith, as well as their deeds, the good ones and the evil ones, their sincerity and their hypocrisy and otherwise, through the light of the Truth; his community knows those [same things] about all other communities through his [their Messenger's light];

*and We did not appoint the direction you were facing, except that We might know*, [meaning] knowledge at the level of differentiation (*tafṣīl*) that follows from a thing becoming knowable, not the knowledge that precedes at the source of the union at the beginning of existence, for it [a thing] is known to him by that [initial] knowledge before it comes into existence because all knowledge belongs to Him with no one other than Him possessing any knowledge. Thus our knowledge, by which we know things, manifests itself upon us as the loci of that manifestation through His knowledge, which is His differentiated knowledge, meaning, His knowledge of the details of existents. Thus by that differentiated mode of knowledge that manifests itself upon us He knows things after they come into existence, just as He knows them by that initial knowledge at the source of union before they come into existence; *who followed the Messenger*, by declaring His Oneness, *from him who turned on his heels*, because of his being veiled through his confinement to [his] religion — *though it were a grave thing*, in other words, that the change [of *qibla*] was grave, that is was troublesome and burdensome, *save for those whom God has guided*, those whom God has guided to the affirmation of His Oneness and delivered them from the veil of [religious] confinement; *but God would never cause your faith to be wasted*, that is, your prayers towards the Holy House [of Jerusalem], because it was [performed] for God. And since it was for Him, in whichever direction you orientated yourselves formerly, He would accept these [prayers]. Upon my life, it was a hardship only for two groups, those veiled by the truth from creation and those veiled by creation from the truth: the former realised that the initial change [of prayer direction], which was from the Ka'ba to the Holy House [of Jerusalem], represented the [external] form of the ascension from the station of the

heart and the mystery, meaning, the unveiling and the communion, to the station of the spirit and the hidden, meaning, the witnessing and the direct vision; and so they [this former group] considered the second change [of prayer direction], which had represented the form of the return to the station of the heart in the state of uprightness and stability (*tamkīn*)<sup>30</sup> for the call, prophethood and the witnessing of the union at the source of differentiation and differentiation at the source of the union where there is no being veiled from creation by the truth or from the truth by creation, [they considered this second change] to be a descent after the ascent and distance after nearness, and they supposed that the efforts to [attain] the more noble station had been wasted and that there was now departure after arrival and a fall from the level, and so this [change] became a hardship for them. As for the other [the second] group, they confined themselves to the [external] form of their rituals and deeds without knowing the wisdom behind the change and supposed the soundness of the latter devotion and not the former and so its going to waste and its invalidation, as they imagined it, became a hardship for them; thus We guided to the opposite of what they had imagined according to what is understood from this verse; *truly, God is Gentle with people*, gentle to them by expanding the breast and removing the veil in the state of subsistence after annihilation for the former [group] and by accepting what the second [group] performed of deeds out of sincerity even if they were not aware of what they were doing, *Merciful*, being merciful to them through the existence of the Truth for the first [group] and the reward for deeds and guidance to the truth for the second [group] and His granting to them of success in rising from their state and station to the station of certainty.

[2:144] *We have indeed seen the turning about of your face [in the heaven]*, in the direction of the heaven of the spirit at the station of union upon being absorbed by the [inclusive] unity (*waḥda*) and being veiled by the Truth from creatures: you are oppressed by the burden of prophethood and the station of the [prophetic] call because of your not paying attention to multiplicity; it is difficult for you to return to the Truth

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<sup>30</sup> As Lloyd Ridgeon points out, for Sufis of the 13<sup>th</sup> century like the Persian ‘Azīz Nasafī, this term denoted the pinnacle of spiritual achievement: ‘When he [the wayfarer] ceases reflection and inspiration presents itself, and inspiration becomes dominant over him, he passes from the world of intelligence and reaches the world of love. When he ceases from inspiration and witnessing presents itself, he passes from the world of love and reaches the station of stability (*maqām-i tamkīn*) and in [the station] of stability, he becomes attributed with whatever attribute he desires. So at first the *dbikr* is dominant over the wayfarer, then reflection is dominant, then inspiration and then witnessing, and finally he reaches the station of stability, and he becomes pure from any variegation [*talwīn*]’: cited in Ridgeon 2002:153, see also p. 154 on Najm al-Dīn Kubrā’s use of *talwīn*, *tamkīn* and *takwīn*.

at the beginning of the state of subsistence after annihilation before [your] stability because of the intensity of your orientation towards the Truth; *now We will surely turn you to a direction that shall satisfy you*: We shall make your face adjoin the *qibla* of the heart by the expansion of the breast, as He says: *Did We not expand your breast for you, and relieve you of your burden, that which weighed down your back* [Q. 94:1-3], for that is a *qibla* with which you shall be satisfied by virtue of the union being there in differentiated form and the unity not being veiled by the multiplicity. So you shall be satisfied with that *qibla* by calling creatures to the Truth while remaining in the vision of the unity. *Turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque*, the side of the expanded breast that is forbidden to the arrival of the attributes of the soul and the insinuations of caprice and Satan; *and wherever you are*, o believers and verifiers, whether you be in the direction of the rising of the spirit or that of the setting of the soul, *turn your faces [towards it]*, to that side, so that you will find it easy to command good and forbid evil in the former [direction], that is, the eastern direction, and to rise from your state and station and to prevent yourselves from being veiled by the insinuations of caprice and Satan in the latter [western direction]. *Those who have been given the Scripture*, that is, the Torah, the Gospels and the Distinguishing Book of the Intellect, that is, the acquired intellect; *know that it is the truth from their Lord*, because of their being guided by what the Book contains in the way of the affirmation of the unity of the acts and the attributes, proof of the Muḥammadan affirmation of the Essential Oneness [of God], or [guided] by the light of the intellect illumined by the light of the Law, not [the intellect that is] veiled by the analogies of reflection [*God is not heedless of what you do.*]

[2:145] *Yet if you should bring to those who have been given the Scripture every sign*, that is proof of the soundness of your prophethood and the validity of your prayer-direction, even if it should be from their own scripture or an incontrovertible rational one, *they will not follow your direction*, on account of their being veiled by their religion and their intelligibles and their confinement to them; *and you are not a follower of their direction*, because of your transcending the level of their religion and your rising above their station; *neither are they followers of one another's direction*, because each of them is veiled by his religion and because of the contradictoriness of their directions that originates in the contradictoriness that is at the centre of [each of] their natures. *If you were to follow their, sundry, whims after the knowledge*, of unity that comprehends you, *has come to you, then you will surely be among [the evildoers]*, [among] those who have diminished what is your due and what is due to your station [as prophet].



[2:146] *Those to whom We have given the Scripture*, a giving [accompanied] with understanding and awareness, *they recognise him, as they recognise their own sons*, that is, [they recognise him as they would] an object of sensory perception that is witnessed and is near and is ever-sensed because of their proximity to him in reality and their knowing him by clear proofs.

*[even though there is a party of them that conceal the truth, while they know.]*

[2:147] *The truth comes from your Lord; then be not among the doubters.*]

[2:148] *Every person has his direction to which he turns*, in other words, every person among you has an ultimate purpose and a perfection in accordance with [the extent of] his original preparedness, [a direction] to which God turns that person's face, or [a direction] to which he himself turns his soul, turning towards it in the measure commensurate with his ipseity and his preparedness by God's permission; *so vie with one another in good works*, [in] those matters that bring you closer to your perfection and your purpose, for which you were created and to which you are urged. *Wherever you may be*, in terms of station and state below [that perfection or goal] or in conflict therewith by virtue of [that station or state] being opposite to it, *God will bring you all together*, to that purpose, sooner or later, depending on the extent to which those things that bring you closer are required [for each of you] and [the extent to which] you vie [against one another] in them; *surely God has power over all things.*

[2:149] *From whatever place you issue forth*, out of the paths of your senses and your inclination to your shares and concern for your welfare and the welfare of the believers, *turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque*, in other words, be present before the Truth in your heart, facing your breast, witnessing therein witnessings and paying attention to its side so that you might be in relation to things through God and not the soul;

*[it is the truth from your Lord. God is not heedless of what you do.]*

[2:150] *From whatever place you issue, turn your face towards the Sacred Mosque;] and wherever you may be*, O believers, *turn your faces [towards it]*, to the side of the breast witnessing your witnessings in it, paying attention to it and not turning away from it in any state, *so that there be not against you, from the people, any argument*, any authoritativeness by [the possibility] that they might seem weighty in your eyes, or that you should take them into consideration [unduly] during your absence from the truth, or because of their feigning superiority over you; or [it means] [lest there be] any overpowering [by them of you] through words or deeds with respect to what you are seeking and demanding, for you will be upon the truth in [seeking] these then; nay, let them submit and yield to you: *for verily the party of God, they are the victors* [Q. 5:56];

*excepting [illā] the evildoers among them*, namely, the disbelievers, those who have been driven away, who have veiled themselves from the truth absolutely, for they are contemptuous of you, neither submitting nor yielding because of their failure absolutely to act upon the truth. The specious claim which they attempt to present as being [a valid] argument and their objection to the Muslims in both word and deed, and their haughtiness towards them in their souls, He has called an ‘argument’ [but only] figuratively; a variant reading has *alā* [instead of *illā*] as an [interjectory] alert so that a new sentence begins with *the evildoers [among them]*:<sup>31</sup> ***do not fear them***, because they cannot overpower you or harm you, ***but fear Me***, be in awe of My Grandeur self-disclosing itself, lest they acquire standing in your hearts and eyes, and lest your breasts incline and so you incline to agree with them in reverence and exaltation of them by virtue of your being in absence and [ensconced] in the soul, as the commander of the believers [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, said: ‘[If you] extol the Creator in yourself, [His] creatures shall seem insignificant in your eyes’; [***and that I may perfect My grace upon you, and that you may be guided***]: [fear Me] because of My having completed the grace of perfection for you and because of My desire for you to be guided I have commanded you to be constantly present and self-examining.

[2:151] ***Just as We have sent***, just as you have been remembered by the sending of, ***a messenger to you***, of your kind to enable you to receive and to learn and to accept guidance from him because of the similarity of genus and the human link,

[***from among yourselves, to recite Our verses to you and to purify you, and to teach you the Book, and wisdom, and to teach you what you knew not.***]

[2:152] ***So remember Me***, by responding [to the call], through obedience and out of [a positive] will, ***and I will remember you***, by granting you more and successive wayfaring and the effusion [from Me] of the light of certainty, ***and be thankful to Me***, for the grace of sending a Messenger and guidance by wayfaring along the path to Me out of love, and I will increase you in gnosis from Me and love of Me, ***and be not ungrateful towards Me***, by being indifferent and veiling yourselves by the grace of religion from the Grace-giver, as this is ingratitude, nay, disbelief [itself].

[2:153] ***O you who have faith***, a faith of eyewitnessing, ***seek help in patience***, with Me during the assaults of the self-disclosures of My greatness and grandeur, ***and [in] prayer***, that is, [in] the true witnessing through Me; ***surely God is with the patient***, those who can bear the self-disclosures of My lights.

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<sup>31</sup> Thus, with this variant (*alā alladhīna zalamū minhum fa-lā takhshawbum*), the reading is: *As for the evildoers among them, then do not fear them.*

[2:154] *And do not say of those slain in God's way*, that is, [those] rendered annihilated, their souls slain in the wayfaring along the path of Oneness, dead in terms of their caprice, as the Messenger of God said: 'Die before you die'. '*They are dead*', that is, they are incapacitated and needy; *rather they are living*, with their Lord through real life and the everlasting eternal life of God, the witnesses of God through essential presence, empowered by Him, *but you are not aware*, because of the blindness of your insight and your privation from the light by which the hearts are able to see the individuals of the world of the Holy and the realities of the spirits.

[2:155] *Surely We will try you with something of fear*, that is, fear of Me that necessitates the breaking of the soul and its defeat, *and hunger*, that necessitates the exhaustion of the body and the weakening of the faculties and the lifting of the veil of caprice and the blocking of Satan's path into the heart, *and diminution of goods*, which are the substrata of lusts which strengthen the soul and increase its insolence, *and souls*, which overcome the heart with their attributes and suffice themselves with their essences, so that by the diminution of these [souls] the heart might be augmented and fortified; or [it means] the souls of kin and friends to whom you resort and seek strength in, so that [thereby] you might dedicate and devote yourselves exclusively to Me, *and fruits*, that is, pleasures and ego-centric enjoyments, so that you might find pleasure in the unveilings and the cognitions of the heart and the spiritual witnessings when your inner aspects become pure when severed from those [fruits] and the deliverance of the insights of your hearts by the fire of spiritual discipline, affliction and seclusion from the deceit of the attributes of your souls; *yet give good tidings to the patient*, meaning those who are patient [in staying away] from what they are familiar with by the pleasure of My love and the power of My will;

[2:156] [*those who, when they are struck by an affliction,*] *say, 'Surely we belong to God*, that is, they have submitted to, and are certain of, the fact that they are My possession of whom I have free disposal, *and to Him we will return'*, in other words, they have been annihilated in Me and witnessed their destruction in Me by Me.

[2:157] *Upon those rest blessings*, in the way of the existence bestowed upon them after annihilation, [existence] characterised by My attributes and illumined by My lights, *and mercy [from their Lord]*, and light and guidance by which they guide [other] creatures to Me, *and those — they are the truly guided*, by My guidance, as mentioned in the supplication: 'And appoint us as guides, guided, not straying nor leading astray'.

[2:158] *Truly Ṣafā and Marwa*, that is, truly the purity (*ṣafā'*) of the existence of the heart and the virtuousness (*muruwwa*) of the existence of the soul, *are among the waymarks of God*, among the heart-based milestones and rituals of His religion,

[waymarks] such as certainty, satisfaction, sincere devotion, reliance and receptivity, such as the prayer, the fast, and all of the other devotions performed by the body; *so whoever makes the Pilgrimage to the House*, that is, [whoever] has attained the station of the Essential Unity and entered the Divine Presence by the total annihilation of his essence, *or the Visitation*, to the fire of the Presence by the affirmation of the unity of the attributes and by his annihilation in the lights of the self-disclosures of the Beauty and the Majesty, *he would not be at fault*, in that case, *if he circumambulates them*, that is, [if] he returns to the stations of both and comes and goes between them but not in their engendered existence, for that is indeed a fault and a sin, rather in the existence bestowed after annihilation upon [reaching the station of] stability; that is why He has precluded any [possibility of] fault [on the part of the one circumambulating], for in this [bestowed] existence, as opposed to the former [kind], there is amplex; *and whoever volunteers good*, meaning, whoever gives good voluntarily in the way of teachings, compassion for creatures, [good] counsel, love for the good-doing folk who put things right, through the existence of the heart, and [whoever gives good voluntarily] in the way of manners, the acts of righteousness and piety, assisting the weak and the needy and securing kindnesses for them and for his dependants through the existence of the soul after the perfection of the wayfaring and subsistence after annihilation; *then truly God is Grateful*, thankful for his deeds by rewarding [him] with increase, *Knowing*, for these [deeds] are [performed] out of the free disposal over things [granted] through God, not through engenderment or affliction or indifference.

[2:159] *Those who conceal the clear proofs and the guidance that We have revealed*, that is, [those] who conceal what We have effused upon them of the clear proofs of the lights of gnoses and the knowledge of the self-disclosures of the acts and the attributes and the guidance of the states and the stations, or the guidance to the affirmation of the Unity of the Essence via certain knowledge. For what is eyewitnessed cannot be concealed by means of variegations of the soul or the heart, [variegations] that mask the unveilings in the heart and the mysterious communions of the night and the spiritual witnessings, *after We have shown them to the people clearly [in the Scripture]*, in the Book of their intellects, [intellects] illumined by the light of the pursuit that perceives the vestiges of the lights of the hearts and the spirits with the blessing of companionship — *they shall be cursed by God*, He will reject them and banish them, *and by the cursers*, from among the High Council, [who curse them] by forsaking them and refraining from reinforcing them from the world of support and light, and [by the cursers] from among the yearning prepared ones, the light of whose hearts they [the now accursed] had enjoyed the intimacy and on whose effusion of light they [the

accursed] had drawn by the strength of their sincerity, and in whose constant companionship they had found rest, enjoying their blessedness and their breaths at the rising radiance of the gleam of their states, [cursing them] by abandoning them and relinquishing their companionship, rejecting them and turning away from them because of their [the accursed ones'] loss of that [light] and their [the cursers'] sensing the sully of their purity.

[2:160] *Except those that repent*, that is, those who have repented from the sins of their states and realised that it had been a trial from God, *and make amends*, in their states by returning [to God] and [engaging in] spiritual discipline, *and show clearly*, that is, [those who], as a result of their truthful conduct towards God and their sincere devotion [to Him], have unveiled and manifested what had been veiled to them — *them I shall turn [relenting]*, I shall accept their repentance and cast upon them [My] relenting; *I am the Relenting, the Merciful*.

[2:161] *But those who disbelieve*, [those who] are veiled from religion or [from] the Truth, *and die disbelieving*, that is, remained in their [state of] veiling such that their preparedness has disappeared and the light of their primordial nature extinguished by [their adherence to] the religion of the veil, and have been cut off from the means by which they would have able to lift the veil of death — *upon them shall be the curse of God and the angels, and of people altogether*: in other words, they have merited total distance, privation, banishment from the Truth and from the world of the angelic realm and from the natural human disposition that is represented by obliteration (*tams*).

[2:162] *Abiding therein*, because of the obliteration of their preparedness and the extinguishing of the light of their primordial nature; *the chastisement shall not be lightened for them*, because of the fact that their chastised configurations are deeply rooted in the substances of their souls; *nor any respite given to them*, because of the attachment to them of those dark configurations.

[2:163] *Your God is One God [there is no god except Him]*: the object of your worship to whom you have exclusively dedicated your worship, O affirmers of the Oneness, is a worshipped One in Essence, One absolutely, apart from Whom there is nothing in existence and besides Whom there is no existent to be worshipped. So how can you associate [others] with Him when all that is other than Him is pure non-existence. Thus association can only be out of ignorance of Him, *the Compassionate*, Who comprehends mercy for every existent, *the Merciful*, Who singles out the mercy of His guidance for the believers who are affirmers of His Oneness. This is the first verse revealed concerning the affirmation of Oneness according to the levels [of *tawhīd*], in other words, [it is] the most formative declaration of Oneness from the perspective of

the Truth but not from our perspective, for the first declaration of Oneness from our part is the affirmation of the unity of the acts, while that [formative one] is the declaration of the unity of the [Divine] Essence; but because this [latter] declaration of unity is too remote from the utmost extent of comprehension of people it came down to the station of the declaration of the unity of the acts so that it can be inferred from the latter. Thus He says:

[2:164] *Surely in the creation of the heavens and the earth*, to the end of this [verse], in other words, in the existentionation of the heavens of the spirits, the hearts and the intellects and the earth of the souls, *and the alternation of [the night and day]*, [the alteration] of light and darkness between them, *and the ships*, that are the bodies, *that run in the sea*, of the absolute mass, *with what benefits people*, in the acquisition of their perfections, *and the water that God sends down from the heaven*, that is, the spirit [which He sends down] from the water of knowledge, *with which He revives the earth*, of the soul, *after it is dead*, because of ignorance, *and He scatters abroad in it all manner of crawling thing*, [meaning] those animal faculties that are alive by the life of the heart, *and the disposition [of the winds, and the clouds compelled between heaven and the earth]*: [the disposition] the tempests resulting from the surplusses of the acts of the Truth and the clouds from the self-disclosures of the lordly attributes, [clouds] disposed and made ready between the heaven[s] of the spirit and the earth of the soul — *surely there are signs*, proofs, *for a people who comprehend*, by means of the intellect that is illuminated by the light of the Law and disengaged from the blemishes of illusion.

[2:165] *Yet there be people who take to themselves compeers besides God, loving them as God is loved*: in other words, those who worship besides God things, either humans of their own species, such as [their] partners, children, parents, ancestors, brothers, lovers, leaders, kings and others; or [who worship things] that are non-human, such as animals, inanimates and all their other properties by dedicating themselves to them, turning their attention to them, taking them into considering, preserving them, looking after them and their condition, thinking of [other] things of the same kind, loving them as they do God, that is, as God ought to be loved. Thus for them these things become equal to God in terms of [their] love and become compeers or associates of God from their point of view, or that they become their objects of love and their objects of worship and nothing else, and so they are for them their deities just as God is the Deity of creatures: they have thus appointed for themselves deities as compeers to the God of all creatures, the God of all worlds.

*but the believers love God more ardently*, than any other, because they only love God. Their love for Him is not confounded with love of others and is not subject to change.

They love things through [their] love of God and for God and in the measure that they find in these [things] a divine aspect, as some have stated: ‘The Truth is our Beloved and creatures are our beloved, but if the two conflict, then the Truth is more beloved to us’, in other words, if the divine aspect no longer resides in them because of their divergence from Him, our love for them is no more; or [it means that] they love [God] more than they love their deities because they love things in themselves for themselves and so inevitably their love changes [for these things] when they themselves change the accidents of their souls upon fear of perdition and the harm that the soul brings upon them. Believers love God through their spirits and their hearts, nay, through God and for God. Their love [for Him] does not change because it is selfless. They expend their spirits and their souls for the sake of His countenance and His approval, abandoning all of their desires for His desire, loving His acts even when they conflict with their caprices, as one of them said: ‘I desire to connect with Him while He desires to abandon me, so I abandon what I desire for what He desires’.

*If he were to see those who did evil [when they see the chastisement]*, that is, [those who] associated [others with God] by their love of warning at the moment they see the chastisement that is the due of their veiling themselves with their deities, *that the might altogether belongs to God [and that God is terrible in chastisement]*, meaning that all power belongs to God, their deities having no share of it. As for the severity of God’s chastisement [of them] by joining them in fire-chains to their deities in the fire of privation fueled by their love of these [deities] cannot be described [in words] which is why the apodosis of the [conditional particle] *law* (‘if’) has been omitted.

[2:166] *When those who were followed disown [their followers]: idh tabarra’a* is a substitution for *idh yarawna’l-‘adhāb*, in other words, the moment of their seeing the chastisement is the moment of the followed disowning the followers, both [moments] being concomitants of one another, as required by the love that was between them on account of the chastisement of each [group] by the other and the confinement and veiling of each [group] by the other from each’s perfection and pleasures, and the severing of the means and the connection that brought about the benefits and enjoyments that existed between them in this world in the way of kinship, blood ties, intimacy, covenants and all of the other ties of this world that bring about benefit and pleasure. All of these are severed when their concomitants and necessary causes are severed, except for the ties of goodness and the divine loves that are based upon spiritual correspondence and pre-eternal mutual acquaintance: these subsist by the subsistence of the spirit forever and increase in the Hereafter after the lifting of the corporeal veils because they entail the love of God that is profitable in the Hereafter, as

God said: 'My love I will surely grant to those who love one another through Me'; *and they have seen the chastisement [and the cords are cut away before them]*: the 'and' (*wāw*) is [the particle] of circumstance, in other words, they disown them at the point of seeing the chastisement and [at the moment of] the severing of the connection between them, that is, at the point of the manifestation of the evil of the comparison [between God and their deities], the consequence of that [comparison] and the end of its benefits, being as useful for them [at that point] as the copulation of dogs, for example.

[2:167] *And those who followed say, 'O, if only we might return again,* in other words, O for a return!

*[and disown them, as they have disowned us!]*

*So, God shall show them their works, anguish for them!*: in other words, their loves and the deeds that are based on them are turned into anguish for them. Such is the predicament of the spiritual faculties that befriend the ego-centric faculties which are subordinate to them and disposed to them for the actualisation of their pleasures.

*[Never shall they exit from the Fire].*

[2:168] *O people, eat of what is in the earth [lawful and wholesome; and follow not the steps of Satan; he is a manifest foe to you]*: that is, partake in the pleasures and the enjoyments that are in the lower direction of the world of the soul and the body in a manner that is lawful and wholesome, that is to say, according to the law of moderation as permitted by the Law and as sanctioned by the intellect in the measure that is needed and is necessary. And do not transgress the limit of moderation, within which these [pleasures and enjoyments] are wholesome and beneficial, into the bounds of immoderation, for these are the footsteps of Satan, which is why God says: *Indeed squanderers are brothers of devils* [Q. 17:27]. For he [Satan] is an enemy to you, [one] whose enmity is clear; he desires to lead you to perdition and make you odious in the eyes of your Lord by your committing of reprehensible acts of immoderation, as He [God] does not love the immoderate. Know that enmity in the world of the soul corresponds to the shadow of familiarity (*ulfā*) in the world of the heart, while moderation is its shadow in the world of the body. Familiarity is the shadow of love in the world of the spirit, the latter being the shadow of true Oneness. Thus moderation is the fourth shadow of the Oneness and Satan flees from the shadow of the Truth, unable to endure it, he is forever stepping from the realm of these shadows into the side of immoderation, and if he is unable, then to the side of excess, as happens in the case of love and familiarity; which is why the commander of the believers 'Alī, peace be upon him, said: 'You find that the ignorant is [one of two], either excessive or prodigal'. Verily the ignorant person is the laughingstock of Satan.



[2:169] *He [Satan] only commands you to evil*, to cause harm and hurt, which is the excess of the irascible faculty, *and indecency*, namely, vile acts that are the excess of the appetitive faculty, *and that you should speak against God what you do not know*, which is the excess of the faculty of speech as a result of the intellect being sullied by illusion, which is the devil disposed for it.

[2:170] *And when it is said to them, 'Follow what God has revealed'*, in terms of taking into consideration the limits of moderation and fairness in all things in the manner prescribed by the Law, *they say, 'No; but we follow what we found our fathers doing'*, in the way of reprehensible acts of immoderation that belong to the age of ignorance, in [blind] imitation of them. *What?*, will you follow them? *Even if their fathers do not understand anything*, of religion or knowledge, *and they were not guided?*, to right deeds because of their ignorance.

[2:171] *The likeness of those who disbelieve*, the likeness of the one who calls on the rejected disbelievers, *is as the likeness of [one who shouts to that which hears nothing, save a call and a cry; deaf, dumb, blind — they do not comprehend]*, [as the likeness of] one who shouts to beasts who cannot hear anything but sounds and do not understand the meaning: thus is their predicament.

[2:172] *O you who believe*: if you are [true] affirmers of Oneness devoting worship exclusively to God, then do not, *eat of*, anything but, *the good things wherewith We have provided you*: in other words, those things provided which justfully ought to be used, *and give thanks to God [if it be Him that you worship]*, by using them for their intended purpose in the proper manner and in the proper measure, for affirmation of Oneness entails paying attention moderation and justice in all things, as the essence entails its shadow and its concomitant. [It is reported] from the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, that God, exalted be He, said: 'Verily I with humankind and the jinn are [involved] in an awesome tiding: I create, yet others are worshipped, and I provide, but others are thanked'.

[2:173] *He has only forbidden you: carrion*, because blood in it is congealed and [because the consumption of] it is far removed from [the principle of] moderation by the deviation of that [creature's] constitution; *blood*, because it mixes with impure faeces which do not receive life, justice and luminosity and because of its ineligibility for such [things] thereafter on account of the lack of maturity; *the flesh of swine*, because of the prevalence of predatorialness and voraciousness and because it [swine] by nature openly engages in filth and unrestricted sexual behaviour, and the same is caused by the consumption of it; *what has been hallowed to other than God*, that for which the voice has been raised that it be sacrificed for other than God, in other words, that by whose

sacrifice and consumption association [of things with God] was intended, since this is contradictory to the affirmation of Oneness and revealing of an associationism; from this [statement] one is given to understand that [it] also [includes] whatever encourages the one consuming it to speak of, and raise his voice [in support of], anything other than God. In other words, every thing that is not consumed in affirmation of [His] Oneness is forbidden to the one consuming it. *Yet whoever is constrained*, from among the community, *not desiring*, [sinfulness] against another constrained person by withholding it [from him], *nor transgressing*, but just to stay alive, *no sin shall be on him*. [*God is Forgiving, Merciful.*]

[2:174] [*Those who conceal what God has revealed of the Scripture, and sell it for a little price*] — *they shall consume nothing in their bellies but*, that is, their bellies' fill is nothing but the fuel of, *the Fire*, of privation and the cause for the igniting of the fire of nature that veils [one] from the light of the truth and chastises through the dark configurations of evil, [configurations] that lead that person to the hell-fire of corporeal [primordial] matter (*hayūlā*). *God shall not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection [and He will not look at them]*,<sup>32</sup> *neither purify them*: an expression of the intensity of His wrath against them and their banishment from Him; [*and theirs is a painful chastisement.*]

[2:175] [*Those are they that have bought error at the price of guidance, and chastisement at the price of pardon; what makes them so patient for the Fire?*]

[2:176] [*That is because God has revealed the Book with the truth; and those that are at variance regarding the Book are in schism, far removed.*]

[2:177] *It is not piety that you turn your faces to the east*, of the world of the spirits, *and to the west*, of the world of [physical] bodies, for that is delimitation and veiling. *True piety is [that of the one who believes in God and the Last Day and the angels]*, the piety of the affirmers of the Oneness who believed in God and the final return at the station of the union — for the affirmation of the Oneness at the station of the union requires sempiternal subsistence, which is the real final return — and who witnessed the union at the [level of the] differentiation of multiplicity and did not veil themselves with the union from the differentiation, that is the inner aspect of the world of the angels and the outer aspect of the world of the prophets, *and the Book [and the prophets]*, [the Book] that combines the outer aspect, by means of rulings, with gnosis and teaches the knowledge of uprightness, [those who believe in that Book] and [who] then become upright after completing the affirmation of Oneness, both at the [level of] union and

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<sup>32</sup> The author includes a sentence from a similar passage in another *sūra* \*\*.

[that of] differentiation by means of the works mentioned. For uprightness is essentially when all the faculties [of an individual] remain within their [respective] limits by the divine command, because of their illumination by the light of the spirit upon that individual's verification of God at the station of subsistence following annihilation, that being the station of justice, so that these [faculties] end up residing in the shadow of the Truth, devoted in its totality to the path of Oneness; *[and who gives of his substance,] however cherished,* in other words, when he [himself] is in need of it and guards it avariciously, as [ʿAbd Allāh] Ibn Masʿūd said: "That you should give of it when you are sound [in health] and protective of it, hoping to live [long] and fearful of being poor; do not wait until [death] reaches the throat and [only] then offer, "this is for him and that is for the other"". God, exalted be He, said: *But prefer others [to themselves] though they be in desperate poverty* [Q. 59:9]. Or [the phrase *ʿalā ḥubbihī* may be understood] out of love for God, lest his heart be occupied by anything other than Him, and because God, exalted be He, is satisfied with its being given; or [it means] out of the love of giving, that is, out of the goodness of [one's] soul, for the munificent person is the one who gives happily and out of the goodness of his soul. From His words *and gives of his substance* to where He says *[to near kin and orphans and the needy and the traveller and beggars, and for slaves, and who observes prayer] and pays the alms,* out of virtuous abstention, which is the perfection of the appetitive faculty and its remaining within its limit for what concerns it. As for His saying: *and those who fulfil their covenant [when they have engaged in a covenant],* out of justice that is the concomitant of wisdom, which is the perfection of the faculty of speech, since if it does not know the consequences of treachery and betrayal and the benefit of the virtue of countering the two, it would not fulfil a covenant; as for His saying, *those who endure with fortitude severity,* hardship, [such as] poverty, *harm,* sickness and terminal illness, *and peril,* namely, war, [enduring it] out of valour, which is the perfection of the irascible faculty, *they,* the ones described in terms of all of these virtues, the ones who are fixed in the station of uprightness, *are the ones who were true,* to God, in the abodes of disengagement, by virtue of their acts which are true piety, *and they are the ones who are fearful,* of loving anyone other than God, even the soul, [those] who are disengaged from the coverings of the initial creation and of nature. 'Substance' (*māl*) may be interpreted as [meaning] knowledge, which is the substance of the heart because on account of it [the heart] becomes stronger and self-sufficient. In other words, he gave away knowledge even though it is beloved to the near kin of the spiritual faculties, because of their nearness to it, and [beloved to] the orphans of the ego-centric faculties, because of their severance from the light of the spirit, which is the true father, and [beloved] to the needy of the natural faculties by virtue of these [faculties] being ever

subservient to the rewards of the body and possessing knowledge of virtuous character traits and meritorious behaviour. When such a person [who gives knowledge] has imbibed spiritual knowledge and knowledge of character traits, manners and the means to [acquire] livelihood, both generally and in an undifferentiated mode, and is finished with his own self, he then bestows [such knowledge] upon the travellers, that is, the wayfarers, and the beggars, that is, the seekers of knowledge and [expends it] for the sake of freeing those enslaved by this world and by [their] lusts from their bondage by means of admonition and sermon and the observance of the prayer of presence, in other words, [by] maintaining [the performance of] it through witnessing, and pays the alms that fortify him against casting his eyes unto the other and against the distractions of passing inclinations [achieving this] through denial and the effacement of attributes. [And by those who fulfil the covenant is meant] those who fulfil the pre-eternal covenant by their adherence to the affirmation of the Oneness and the annihilation of [their] essence and actual existence; and [by those who endure is meant] those who endure with fortitude the severity of being ever in need of God and the harm of the breaking of the soul and the repressing of caprice and the peril of battling against Satan: they are the ones who are true to God by fulfilling His covenant and by the resoluteness and determination of [their] wayfaring; they are the ones who guard against associating [others with Him] and who are exalted above all the rest.<sup>33</sup>

[2:178] *[O you who believe, prescribed for you is retaliation, regarding the slain; a free man, for a free man, and a slave for a slave, and a female for a female. But if anything is pardoned any one in relation to his brother, let the pursuing be honourable. And let the payment to him be with kindness; that is an alleviation given by your Lord, and a mercy; and for him who commits aggression after that — his is a painful chastisement].*

Retaliation is a law based on principles of justice, prescribed to remove the aggressions of the predatorial faculty, being a shadow of His justice, exalted be He, so that if He dispenses [of this] to a servant of His by annihilating him, He compensates him the 'free man' of his spirit with a better spirit divinely-endowed and [compensates him] the slave of his heart with a heart divinely-endowed and the female of his soul with a divinely-endowed soul that is perfect.

[2:179] *There is for you [in retaliation],* in God's compensating you in the manner mentioned, a great *life*, that is, a life whose very essence cannot be described, *O people of pith*, that is, [O people] of intellect pure of the rind of illusion and the coverings of individual existences and physical bodies; such then is [the case with] this [principle of]

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<sup>33</sup> This entire passage is a commentary on verse 177, above.

retaliation, *so that you might be wary*, of neglecting it and so that you might adhere to it.

[2:180] [*Prescribed for you, when any of you is approached by death and leaves behind some good, is to make testament in favour of his parents and kinsmen honourably — an obligation on those that fear*]

The making of a testament and honouring it is another law prescribed in order to remove the deficiency of the possessive faculty, that is to say, the faculty of [rational] speech, and its [that faculty's] falling short of the wisdom required to dispose of wealth and to have mastery over the other two faculties by means of the light of the Truth and the stipulations of the Law and also to prevent these [faculties] from any aggression in the way of changing the testament [in question], which is a kind of crime and a betrayal; [the law is also meant] to incite that [rational faculty] to verify and scrutinise the wisdom that constitutes its perfection by setting things right among those for whom the testament is made in accordance with wisdom when any harm is anticipated or known from the part of the testator, be it inadvertent or intentional. Fasting is another law that has been prescribed to eliminate the aggression of the bestial faculty and its power of control. The right to retaliation of the people of the truth is as has been mentioned and the testament for them [to honour] is to uphold the pre-eternal covenant by shunning all that is other than the Truth, as God, exalted be He, says, *And Abraham enjoined this upon his sons and [so did] Jacob* [Q. 2:132]. Their fast is to abstain from any speech, act, movement, or rest that is not [performed] in truth for the sake of the Truth.

[2:181] [*Then if anyone changes it after hearing it, the sin shall rest upon those who change it; surely God is Hearing, Knowing.*]

[2:182] [*But if any one fears injustice or sin from one making testament, and so makes things right between them, then no sin shall be upon him; surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.*]

[2:183] [*O you who believe, prescribed for you is the Fast, just as it was prescribed for those that were before you so that you might guard yourselves.*]

[2:184] [*For days numbered; and if any of you be sick, or be on a journey, then a number of other days; and for those who are able to do it, a redemption: the feeding of a poor man. For him who volunteers good; that is good for him; but that you should fast is better for you, if you but knew.*]

[2:185] [*The month of Ramadān, namely, the consumption of the soul by the fire of the light of the Truth, wherein, at that time, was revealed the Qur'ān, in other words, the*

all-encompassing undifferentiated knowledge that is called the Qur'anic intellect that leads to the station of the union [*a guidance for the people*] as a means to guiding people to the unity on account of the union, *and as clear signs of the Guidance [and the Criterion]*, and proofs that are connected to the union and the dispersion, in other words, the differentiated knowledge that is called the Criterion intellect. [*So let those of you who are present at the month*], so let he who was present at that time, that is to say, [let] he who had attained the station of the witnessing of the essence, *fast it*, that is, let him abstain from any speech, act or movement that does not involve the Truth; *and if any of you be sick*, that is, tested by sicknesses of the heart by way of the ego-centric veils that prevent such a witnessing, *or if he be on a journey*, that is [if he] still be wayfaring and has not reached [the station of] the witnessing of the essence, [*then a number of other days*] then he has other stages which he needs to pass in order to reach that station. *God desires ease for you*, by [your] attaining the station of the Oneness and being reinforced by the power of God, *and desires not hardship for you*, namely, the charging of acts upon weak and incapacitated souls; *and so that you fulfil the number*, and so that you complete those stages and states and stations that will make [you] arrive [at the station of the witnessing of the Essence], [*and magnify God for having guided you*], and so that you extol God and come to know His grandeur and magnificence for His guiding you to the station of the Union, *and that you might be thankful*, by being [morally] upright: He has commanded you [to do] that.

[2:186] *And if My servants*, the wayfarers, the seekers, those oriented towards Me, *should question you [concerning Me]*, about [spiritual] knowledge of Me, *I am near*, manifest, *I answer the call [of the caller when he calls to Me]*, of the one who calls me by the tongue of his state and preparedness by granting him that which is commensurate with his state and preparedness; *so let them respond to Me*, by making pure their preparedness through renunciation and [acts of] worship [*and let them believe in Me that they might go aright*], for I summon them unto Me and apprise them of the way of wayfaring unto Me; and let them witness Me at the point of their purification [of their preparedness], for I disclose Myself to them in the mirrors of their hearts so that they might become rightly-guided through uprightness, in other words, so that they might become upright and righteous.

[2:187] *It is permitted to you*, that is, it is allowed for you, *upon the night of the Fast*, that is, at those moments of forgetfulness which intervene in the abstention mentioned during the time of your presence, *to go in to your wives*, to condescend to the temptations of your souls on account of the shares due to them, since you will not endure staying away from these given that these [temptations] constantly garb you and

that you constantly dress yourselves with them, necessarily by virtue of [your souls] being attached [to you]; *God knows that you have been betraying yourselves*, by stealing [moments for those] shares during various times of such wayfaring, spiritual discipline or presence [that you may be involved in]; *and so He has turned to you [relenting], and He has pardoned you. So now*, that is, during the time of uprightness and stability in the state of subsistence after annihilation: *lie with them*, during those moments of forgetfulness, *and seek what God has prescribed for you*, of fearing God and having power over those shares by allowing for what is due in the way of uprightness and the fulfilment of what God has commanded of servanthood (*‘ubūdiyya*) and the calling [of others] to Him; *and eat and drink*, that is, be in the company [?] of these [things], *until the white thread is distinct to you from the black thread at daybreak*, [that is] until there manifest upon you the glimpses and flashes of the Presence, [until] Its effects and lights prevail against the blackness and darkness of forgetfulness; *[then complete the fast to the night; and do not lie with them, while you cleave to the mosques in devotion [to God]]*: then adhere to the mentioned abstention through [your] presence with the Truth until the time of forgetfulness comes [again]: for were it not for this [return of forgetfulness] a person would not be able to pursue [his] best interests for what concerns livelihood and [the fulfilment of] his duties.<sup>34</sup>

[*Those are God’s bounds; do not approach them*]: and do not approach them in your state of spiritual retreat, during your stay and presence in the mosques of your heart, lest your [spiritual] moment be disturbed by the manifestation of these [temptations].<sup>35</sup>

[*So, God makes clear His signs to people so that they might fear.*]

[2:188] *And do not consume your goods*, your gnoses and the knowledge that you have acquired, *among yourselves in deception*, [that is] through the vain passions and pleasures of the soul by the actualisation of the objects of its desires and the acquisition of its sensory and imaginal goals in the use of these [goods]; *and proffer them*, so that they are sent to [*to the judges*] to the arbiters of the evil-commanding souls, *that you*

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<sup>34</sup> Moments of forgetfulness that litter the spiritual path or journey, despite being distractions, are necessary for the fulfilment of one’s duties in this world; that is what is meant by Kāshānī’s reference to the ‘shares’ that a person’s worldly desires exact from him. This is an important riposte to the oft-repeated inaccuracy that Sufism requires severing oneself from the things of this world: the animal soul that is part and parcel of an individual’s existence in this sublunar world demands what is due to it. Of course, the idea is to discipline that aspect until one has mastery over it, which then allows that the true dues are performed (devotion to God etc.).

<sup>35</sup> The reference is to the temptations to which they are permitted to submit after the breaking of the fast, but not during *i’tikāf*.

*may consume a portion of the goods [of other people], of the spiritual faculties, in sin,* that is, out of injustice as you expend these [goods] in [pursuit of] the delights of the ego-centric faculties, *while you are aware,* that this is a sin and a misuse of a thing.

[2:189] *They will ask you about the new moons,* that is, about the risings of the heart upon the radiation on them of the light of the spirit. *Say, 'They are appointed times for the people [and the Pilgrimage']*, that is, [they are] the moments in which transactions must be carried out for the cause of God, as well as the resolve for wayfaring, the circumambulation of the House of the heart and the standing at the station of gnosis. *It is not piety to come to the houses,* of your hearts, *from their backs,* by way of your senses and the knowledge that you have acquired that derives from corporeal feelings, for the back of the heart is the aspect that is adjacent to the body; *but piety is,* the piety of, *the one who guards himself,* against the distractions of the senses and the murmurings of the imagination and the whisperings of the soul; *so come to the houses by their, inner, doors,* those that lie adjacent to the spirit and the truth, for the door of the heart is the path by which it is opened unto to the truth; *and fear God,* if you are distracted by what distracts you from Him, *that you may prosper.*

[2:190] *And fight in the way of God with those who fight against you,* from among Satan and the faculties of the souls that command [evil], *but do not aggress,* in fighting against these [faculties] by totally suppressing them and not fulfilling what is rightfully due to them and adhering to [what is] their limits, lest they then fall into excess, shortcoming and laxity. *Indeed God loves not the aggressors,* on account of their being outside the shadow of love and unity, that itself constitutes justice.

[2:191] *And slay them wherever you come upon them,* [wherever] you find them: eliminate the life in them and prevent them from their acts by suppressing their desires which are [the source of] their spirit wherever they may be; *and expel them from [where they expelled you]:* from the Mecca of the breast when they seize it, as they expelled you from it when they drew you down to the site of the soul and out of the seat of the heart; *[seditious temptation is more grievous than slaying]:* their seditious trial, that is their worship of its [the soul's] desires and the idols of its [carnal] delights, is more grievous than the suppression of its desires and its total mortification or [it means] that your being tested and tried by their conquest is more grievous for you than being slain which is the obliteration of your animal instincts and the total effacement of your preparedness because of the increased pain [that would ensue] therefrom.

*But fight them not by the Sacred Mosque,* which is the station of the heart, that is, [do not fight them] during the presence of the heart if they accord with your orientation, for they would then be aids to you in your wayfaring, *until they should fight you there,*



and contend with you in pursuit of their demands, dragging away from the heart and the religion of truth towards the station of the soul and their religion, which is the worship of the calf; [*then if they fight you, slay them — such, is the requital of disbelievers*].

[2:192] *But if they desist, surely God is Forgiving, Merciful.*

[2:193] *Fight them till there is no sedition*, caused by their contention, motives and worship, *and the religion is for God*, by the orientation of all of these towards the Holy and their falling on the side of the mystery in being oriented towards the Truth, wherein neither Satan nor desire has any share; *then if they desist, there shall be no enmity*, against them, [*save against evildoers*], except against the transgressors who overstep their bounds.

[2:194] *The sacred month for the sacred month*, in other words, the time during which these [the faculties of the evil-commanding soul] prevent you from [fulfilling] your goals and [the obligations of] your religion is the very time during which you should prevent them from their recalcitrance until they are content to adhere to their bounds; their sacred month is the time for them to fulfil what is due from them; your sacred month is the time for the presence and self-examination;

[*holy things demand retaliation; whoever commits aggression against you, then commit aggression against him in the manner that he committed against you; and fear God, and know that God is with the God-fearing.*]

[2:195] *And expend in the way of God*, what you possess of knowledge by acting in accordance therewith and do not store this away for some other time, lest you not live to see it, for there is nothing more injurious than procrastination; *and cast not [yourselves] by your own hands into*, the, *destruction*, that is excess and the postponement of action through knowledge, expending it for the welfare of your souls, since that necessarily brings about privation; *but be virtuous*, in other words, in [the performance of] your acts be witnesses, *for indeed God loves the virtuous*, those who are witnesses of their Lord in their acts, performing them in sincere devotion to Him.

[2:196] *Fulfil the Pilgrimage*, that is the declaration of the unity of the Essence, *and the Visitation*, that is the declaration of the unity of the attributes by completing all of the stations and states through your wayfaring, *to God*, and in God; *but if you are restricted*, by the [evil-]commanding soul's unbelievers' preventing you from these, *then [give] such offering as may be feasible*, and struggle in the way of God by driving the offering of the soul and sacrificing it in the courtyard of the heart's Ka'ba or the open space of that which the heart has desired of it in the way of a station. The [expression] 'such as may

be feasible' is an allusion to the fact that each soul is different [from the next] in terms of its preparedness and its attributes: some [souls] are characterised by [possessing] the attributes of a feeble animal, while others [are characterised] by the attributes of a powerful animal, and upon each is what is feasible; some [are characterised] by the attributes of a meek animal, easily-led, while others still by the attributes of a difficult animal, not easily-led; it may be that some of them possess an attribute which cannot easily be curbed, even though all its other attributes may be easily curbed — such a pilgrim always finds himself restricted; *and do not shave your heads*: do not remove the effects of nature and prefer that the heart be in [a state of] goodness and the mind free of all anxieties and attachments, as well as habits and devotions, [content in] restricting yourself to untroubled moments, as is the way of the Qalandriyya; *until the offering*, of the soul, *reaches its place*, namely, its sacrificial spot or the place of its immolation, which requires that its acts, which had been prohibited during its lifetime on account of its [desire for them out of] caprice, become permitted upon its slaughter because these [desires] are then from the heart, so that you then become secure from the remains of these [acts] for otherwise your moment would be disturbed and your peacefulness sullied by their becoming manifest and stimulated upon being summoned by the expansion of the heart, as is the case with most [adherents] of the Qalandriyya today. *If any of you is sick*, that is, of a weak preparedness, whose heart is filled with accidents that are concomitants of its [the soul's] nature or acquired through habit; *or has an ailment of the head*, or is prevented, afflicted with anxieties, attachments, depravities or [certain] configurations so that neither wayfaring nor [spiritual] struggle in the way required is feasible for him, but that [if] instead such [a person] is content to restrict himself to goodness of the heart and a peaceful moment so that he might remain upon [his] primordial nature and not relapse or come down a degree, even if [it means that] he would not [be able to] rise [a degree], then he has to offer a redemption by way of abstaining from some of his pleasures and ego-centric preoccupations, or performing a pious act or spiritual disciplining and struggling that might curb some of his competing faculties: let such [a person] preserve his moment and look after his purity [of state] by means of some [act of] renunciation, devotion or [simply by] contravening the [temptations of his] soul.

*When you are secure*, from the beseiging enemy, *then whoever enjoys [the Visitation]*, the tasting of the self-disclosure of the attributes seeking this as a means to the pilgrimage of the self-disclosure of the Essence; *let his offering be such as is feasible*, in accordance with his state, *or if he finds none*, because of the weakness of his soul, its dullness and defeat, *then a fast of three days*, then he has to abstain from the acts associated with the

faculties, which are the powerful principles, [*in the Pilgrimage*], at the time of self-disclosure and the total immersion in the union and the annihilation in the unity; for these, the [faculties of] intellect, estimation and imagination, must be veiled and dragged down to the depths of the soul and the breast; *and of seven when you return*, to the station of differentiation and multiplicity, which is the five external senses, as well as anger and passion, so that he might be upright in [performing] things for the sake of God; *that is a full ten*, an outline, in other words, those mentioned abstentions from the acts of these faculties and sentiments constitute all of the perfect details that inevitably induce the great effects of the faculties of that existence of his that is endowed with the truth upon the attainment of perfection, as He said, 'I become his hearing by which he hears and his sight by which he sees' until the end of the *ḥadīth*,<sup>36</sup> *that, ruling, is for him whose family are not present at the Sacred Mosque*, those perfect beloved who are present at the station of the heart at the unity, for he can have no offering, no struggle and no spiritual discipline for his arrival and wayfaring to God; rather that is for the lovers. [*And fear God, and know that God is severe in retribution*].

[2:197] *The Pilgrimage is in months well-known*, in other words, the time for the Pilgrimage is a series of defined periods, namely, from the attainment of physical maturity to the age of forty, as He said in the description of the cow, [that it was] *neither old nor virgin, [but] middling between that* [Q. 2:68]; *whoever undertakes the duty of Pilgrimage during them*, upon himself with resolve and commits himself, *then no lewdness*, that is, [no] lewd act by the manifestation of the appetitive faculty, *nor wickedness*, no revilement [of others], meaning, the dissent of the irascible faculty against obedience to the heart, *or disputing*, that is, violating the rational faculty by means of a devilish act, *in the Pilgrimage*, that is, when seeking the house of the heart. *Whatever good you do*, in the way of a meritorious act through these three faculties by the command of the Law and that of the intellect, to the exclusion of any despicable acts, *God knows it*, and will reward you for it. *And take provision*, from the meritorious aspects [of these faculties] which necessarily means that you avoid the despicable ones; *for the best provision is guard oneself*, against such [despicable acts], *and fear you Me*, in your actions and intentions, *O people of pīth!*, for the main issue for the pīth [your innermost heart], that is, the intellect that is pure from any of the blemishes of illusion and the husk of matter, is to fear Me.

[2:198] *You would not be at fault if you should seek bounty from your Lord*, that is, do not have any inhibitions, upon your return to mutiplicity, about seeking gentle

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<sup>36</sup> This *ḥadīth qudsī* is cited above, in the commentary to Q. 2:9.

comforts for your souls and giving them the enjoyment of their shares [of this world] in accordance with the Law and as permitted by the Truth, for [the fulfilment of] their shares thus would reinforce their being in harmony with the heart in its pursuit of its goals and because they would not then be transgressors illumined as they would be by the light of the Truth; *but when you press on*, that is, when you push your souls forward [*from 'Arafāt*], from the station of complete gnosis, which is the last of the holy rites of the Pilgrimage and the mother of them all, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, said, “The Pilgrimage is essentially ‘Arafa”; *then remember God at the Sacred Waymark*, that is, witness God’s beauty at the spiritual mystery that is called the Hidden (*al-khafīyy*), for remembrance at this station is to witness, while the sacred waymark is the locus for sensing the beauty which the other is forbidden from reaching; *and remember Him as He has guided you*, to remembrance of Him at the [various] levels. For He, exalted be He, has guided [you] first to remembrance by the tongue, which is the remembrance of the soul, then to the remembrance by the heart which is the remembrance of the acts, [remembrance] from which issue forth the graces and favours of God, then to the remembrance of the innermost heart which is the eyewitnessing of the acts and the unveiling of the sciences of the disclosures of the attributes, then to the remembrance of the spirit which is the witnessing of the lights of the disclosures of the attributes together with the observing of the light of the Essence, then to the remembrance of the Hidden which is the witnessing of the beauty of the Essence together with the subsistence of the duality [?], then to the remembrance of the essence which is the witnessing of the essence through the lifting of the subsistence, *though previously*, that is, before your arrival and stand at the ‘Arafāt of gnosis, *you were misguided*, [away] from these remembrances.

[2:199] *Then press on from where the people press on*, then press on towards the outer forms of devotion and obedience, and all of the duties ordained by the obligations and transactions of the Law, ‘from where’ meaning from the station from which all people press on [to engage in these devotions] and be like any one of them. Al-Junayd [of Baghdad], God’s mercy be upon him, was once asked, “What is the end?”. He said, “The return to the beginning”; *and seek God’s forgiveness*, against the soul’s manifesting itself and becoming weary of its state and its tyranny. The Prophet said, “Verily my heart is overcome [by the temptations of the soul] and I so seek God’s forgiveness seventy times a day”. And he said, “O God, establish me firmly upon your religion” and he was asked about [why he would say] this, to which he replied, “What [else] would give me security given that the likeness of the heart is as a feather in an open expanse which the winds turn about as they wish”. And when his feet became swollen [from the

exertions of prayers], ‘Ā’isha, may God be pleased with her, said to him, “Has not God already forgiven your sins past and future?”, to which he said, “Should I not then be a grateful servant?” The Commander of the Believers [‘Alī], “I seek refuge with God from misguidance after guidance”.

[2:200] *And when you have performed your holy rites*, and are finished with the Pilgrimage, *remember God as you remember your fathers, or yet more intensely*, in other words, do not be like the followers of habit, preoccupied with the remembrance of your lineage and mutual vainglory and all of the worldly states, for all of that sullies your moment and hardens the heart. Rather, occupy yourselves with the various types of invocation and group remembrance with your brothers, just as you used to invoke the states of your lineages and the states of this world before the wayfaring, or as intensely as such people remember these states habitually or more intensely and more profoundly and more frequently than them so that your purity might subsist and people might be guided through you. *There are some people who say, ‘Our Lord, [give to us in this world]’*, in other words, they only demand the things of this world and occupy themselves solely with remembrance of them and only worship God for the sake of [securing] these; *such people will have no part in the Hereafter*, since his orienting of himself towards the lowly prevents him from receiving the nobler because his aspirations never rise to the latter and [because of] the acquisition of the darkness that precludes [the acquisition of] light.

[2:201] *And there are others who say, ‘Our Lord, give to us [in this world good, and good in the Hereafter, and guard us against the chastisement of the Fire]’*, that is, such a person demands the good of both abodes and guards against being veiled by darkness and being chastised by the fires of physical nature and [against] the privation from the lights of mercy.

[2:202] *Those — they shall have a portion from what they have earned*, of the shares of the Hereafter and the lights of the abode of permanence and the pleasures that endure as a result of [their] righteous deeds after the self-reckoning and the removal of some of [their] good deeds by the evil ones and their chastisement commensurate with these [evil deeds] or their being pardoned.

[2:203] *And remember God during certain days numbered*, that is, at certain levels after finishing from the Pilgrimage, which are the levels of the spirit, that of the heart and that of the soul, for if the one who has arrived returns, he will return to these levels and in all three levels he must be in God, that which constitutes his remembrance. *If any man hastens on in two days, that is no sin for him*, in other words, the one who hastens to his shares at the levels of the spirit and the heart, then no sin shall be against him,

for the spirit and the heart and their [respective] shares do not veil and do not harm. The meaning of ‘hastening’ is that if movement takes place through God, then it is faster because it is not accompanied by delay or stop until either the heart or the spirit manifests itself and becomes a luminous veil, as it does in the case of those of variegation; *and if he delays*, until the third, which is the level of the soul, *it is not a sin for him, if he guards himself*; that judgement applies to the one who guards against being with the soul during the shares of the soul; for the soul adheres more intensely to its share than [do] its two companions [the heart and the spirit] and its share is harsher and remoter from light than the shares of these two [companions] and it manifests itself more rapidly given that it is marked by fickleness and movement, in contrast with its two companions. Moreover, its share often veils and when it veils, its veil is a harsh and dark one; thus to be on one’s guard and to be cautious is obligatory and more of a priority than in the case of the other two, since if these [latter] manifest themselves their veil is thin and disappears more easily; or [it is that] this choice [of delaying] is for the one who guards himself at all three levels; *and fear God*, in all three places, lest egoism and the ego in existence (*āniyya*) manifest themselves, so that you might be in Him in all shares, and not with your soul, heart or spirit; *and know that to Him you shall be gathered*, that is, that you will be gathered with Him, gathered from one Name to another Name, present in His presence. Thus you stand in great danger, unlike all other people, as is mentioned in the *ḥadīth*, “The saved ones are upon great danger”, and it is related from the Prophet from God, “Give good tidings to the sinners that I am Forgiving and warn the truthful ones that I am Forgiving”.

[2:204] *And among people there is he who pleases you*, that is, he feigns love, but is most stubborn in dispute, because he stands at the station of the soul as a heretic, which is why He says *in his speech in the life of this world*, since he has nothing to say through his heart in the Hereafter.

[2:205] *And when he turns his back, he hastens about the earth [to do corruption there and to destroy the tillage and the stock]*, because of his disregard of the Law and his heresy, which is the case that you see with most of those who claim love [of God] and affirmation of the Oneness, *and God loves not corruption*: in other words, he is a worker of corruption but claims to love God. But how would such [love] be forthcoming in his case when the lover only does what his beloved loves and God does not love what he does. Such a person cannot be truthful in his claim, as the poet says:

‘You disobey the Divine while you outwardly manifest love of Him.

That is vile, an act unheard of. For if your love were truthful you would be obedient to Him. Indeed, the lover is to his beloved obedient’.

[2:206] *And when it is said to him, 'Fear God', he is seized by vainglory in his sin*, in other words, egocentric zealotry, the zealotry of pagandom [cf. Q. 48:26] has driven him to sin in obstinacy and insolence because of his soul's becoming manifest at that point and his claim that he is better informed about his actions than the one counselling him; *so Gehenna shall be enough for him*, that is, his ultimate goal is the very depth of his lowly level, in which he is, and its darkness, for Gehenna means a darkened abyss of unfathomable depth.

[2:207] *[But there are other men who] sell themselves, desiring God's pleasure*, who expend themselves in wayfaring upon the path of God seeking His satisfaction.

[2:208] *[O you who believe] come into submission [all of you]*, meaning, into surrender and the submission of your countenances to God, since the mutual enmity between the faculties and their discord in failing to submit to God's command is proof that you are following [the steps of] Satan, who wishes for you to merit God's subjugation by committing reprehensible acts of excess, because of his instinctive enmity towards you on account of his innate disposition being different from yours and [on account of] his lacking the light of your primordial nature, given that he was created from fire and seeks only that you be fiery like him and not luminous. He is thus an enemy in the form of a lover.

[2:209] *But if you slip*, from the station of submission to God's command, *after the clear proofs*, the proofs of the disclosures of the acts and the attributes, *have come to you, know then that God is Mighty*, Victorious and will vanquish you, *Wise*, vanquishing only as required by wisdom and wisdom requires the vanquishing of the contending opponent so that the assenting obedient one takes heed and becomes more obedient.

[2:210] *What do they wait for that God shall come to them*, disclose Himself, *in the shadows*, in the attributes of Ipseity from among the entirety of the disclosures of [His] attributes and [in] the forms of the angels of the heavenly powers while He has decreed the command for their destruction in the [Preserved] Tablet; *and to God all matters are returned*, whereupon every man is confronted with his recompense or his soul departs to Him through annihilation.

[2:213] *People were one community*, that is, upon the [one] primordial nature and the religion of truth, as the Prophet said, "Every newborn is upon the primordial nature and while he is upon the covenant of the first nature — or [he said] during childhood, or during the time of Adam, peace be upon him — he is upon the truth". *People were one community*, they then differed upon being created, in accordance with their different natures and [the different degrees of] in which [certain] attributes of their souls

predominate, and their different airs.<sup>37</sup> For the opposition within the bases of their make-up and the positioning points of their bodies together with the variedness of [their] locations and atmospheres requires that [it be so], as does [the tendency in] their character to draw out what is specifically beneficial [to each] and to repel what is specifically harmful, [and this is] because of the fact that each [one of them] is veiled by the matter of his own body and [because] the divine wisdom requires that it be so for the welfare of creation, since growth entails mutual enmity and contrariety;

*then God sent forth the prophets*, in order to summon them away from disagreement and towards concord, and from multiplicity towards unity, and from enmity towards mutual love; but they split into groups against them and became distinct [groups]. As for the inhabitants of the lower world, those in whose character love of falsehood has taken deep roots and whose hearts have been taken over by rust that which has imprinted itself upon them and blinded them, such that their preparedness has dissipated because of the predominance of their caprice and their discord and obstinacy have increased: it is as though they differed only at their sending forth [at the resurrection] and [at the point of] their being brought the book, which is the cause for truth and concord becoming manifest, out of the mutual envy that has issued forth from their souls and because of the prevailing [over them] of their caprice and [because of] their being veiled. As for the inhabitants of the higher realm, who have remained upon the original purity and the primordial preparedness, these God has guided them to the truth over which they had [previously] been in disagreement, so that their disagreement disappears and they wayfare upon the straight path.

[2:214] *Or did you suppose that you should enter, the, Paradise, of the disclosure of the Beauty, without there having come upon you [the like], the state, of those who passed away before you? They were afflicted by, the misery of avoidance, disengagement, poverty and need [of God], and [by] the hardship of struggle, spiritual discipline and the breaking of the soul through worship, and were shaken, by the exigencies of yearning and love away from the established abodes of their souls so that they might manifest the potential within their preparedness, to the point that the Messenger and those who believed with him said, 'When will God's help come?'*, in other words, to the point that you have become exasperated at the lengthy duration of [their state of] being veiled and the extent of [spiritual] struggling against the separation and the loss of patience [waiting] to witness the Beauty and to taste the union; they thus demand God's help through Self-disclosure in order to suppress the attributes of the soul despite

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<sup>37</sup> Cf. Chittick's discussion of this term (as the plural of *hawā'*, 'caprice'), 1989:137.



the strength of their patience and virtuous suffering of what the Beloved does and what He wants for them in the way of afflicting them with abandonment and making them taste of separation because of the intensity of the power of [their] love [for Him]: [imagine then] how it is with those others [who have no such love for Him]. And when their effort has reached its limits and their energies are exhausted they are granted their request and it is said to them: *Ab, but surely God's help is nigh*: in other words, the veil is lifted and the effects of the Beauty become manifest.

[2:216] *Prescribed for you is*, to fight against the soul and Satan 'though it be hateful to you', more bitter than the taste of colocynth and more terrible than the bone-crunching bite of a lion. *Yet it may happen that you hate a thing which is good for you*, because you veil yourselves with the caprice of the soul and the love of quick pleasure from what is within [that struggle] in the way of much good and tremendous spiritual pleasure that scorns that shortlived hardship when compared with that enduring good and timeless everlasting pleasure; the same applies to the opposite [statement] [*and it may happen that you love a thing which is bad for you*]. *And God knows*, the good and the evil that affairs entail, *and you do not know*, these things because of your being veiled by the here and now from what will be and by the manifest from the hidden.

[2:217] *They ask you about the sacred month, [about] fighting in it*: they ask you about the struggle of the soul and its helpers and [about] Satan and his hosts at the moment of orientation and wayfaring to the Truth and the concentration of the hidden aspects, in which any motion of by the inmost consciousness is forbidden. *Say*: to engage in the spiritual struggle at that [very] moment is a serious and arduous affair; to turn your faces away from the way of God and the station of the mystery and the locus of the presence is to become veiled from the Truth; and to expel the people of the heart, who are the spiritual faculties, from their resting places is more terrible and grave in God's sight; the seditious trial of idolatry and disbelief and the test you have to endure by them is graver than your slaying of them with the swords of spiritual discipline; these egocentric faculties and satanic caprices will not cease to fight against you by driving you away from your religion and your goals and summoning you to the religion of caprice and satanism, *until they turn you from your religion if they are able; and whoever of you turns from his religion*, by following them — *those, their works*, which they have done, in terms of their submission and obedience, *have failed. Those are the inhabitants of the Fire*, of the veil and [its] chastisement, *abiding therein*.

[2:218] *Verily those who have believed*, with certainty, *and have emigrated*, from the places inhabited by the soul and [from] the familiarities of caprice, *and have struggled in God's way*, and [against] the hosts of Satan and the evil-commanding soul — *those have*

*hope of God's compassion*, the self-disclosures of the attributes and the lights of the witnessing.

[2:219] *They ask you about*, the, *wine*, of caprice and the love of this world, *and the chance-games*, of the conniving of the soul in order to draw out [its] share. *Say: 'In both there is [great] sin*: veil and distance [from God]; *and profit for people*, in the way of livelihood and the actualisation of egocentric pleasures and joy at the overlooking of contemptible and disturbing [spiritual] configurations and sullyng anxieties *but the sin in them is greater than the usefulness'*. *And they will ask you what they should expend. Say: Comfortably'*. *So, God makes clear His signs to you that you might reflect ...*

[2:243] *Have you not seen who went forth from their habitations*, that is, from their familiar [spiritual] abodes and the habitual resting-points of their souls and [from] their stations and levels of this world and did not become dependent on them by the exigencies of caprice — such people being numerous?, [*in their thousands*], *fearful of death?*, [that is, fearful] of ignorance and severance from the real life and [fearful] of falling into the abysses of natural desire; *God said to them, 'Die!'*, in other words, He commanded them to voluntary death or He made them die to their essences by the self-disclosure of His essence so that they were annihilated in the Unity. *Then He gave them life*, through the real life of knowledge or through Himself by means of the bestowed existence of the Truth and subsistence after annihilation; it is not far-fetched [to say] that what He means by this is what was meant by the story of Ezra: they went forth in flight from natural death, whereupon God made them die and then gave them life by attaching their spirits to bodies of a genus similar to their bodies so that they might actualise therewith their perfection. [*Truly God is bounteous to people, but most people are not thankful*].

[2:244] *So fight in God's way*, [against] the soul and Satan according to the first [interpretation] and the second; according to the third [reading], do not fear death when engaging the enemy for fleeing [from it] shall not avail you just as it did not avail those [mentioned above]: God will give you life as He gave those life; [*and know that God is Hearing, Knowing*].

[2:245] [*Who is he that will lend God*] *a loan that is good*, namely the expending of the soul through struggle or expending wealth out of love [*and He will multiply it for him manifold?*] *God straitens and enlarges*, in other words, He is as you are in your dealings in terms of straitening and enlarging, for in your descriptions you are demeaning His descriptions. When you are niggardly with what you possess, He straitens [things] for

you and stints; but when you are munificent, He enlarges [His provision] for you in accordance with your munificence, as mentioned in the *ḥadīth*: ‘Assistance is sent down commensurate to the provision [given]’; [*and to Him you shall be returned*].

[2:247] [*Then their prophet said to them, ‘Verily as king for you God has raised up* *Saul*: [he] was a poor man of no [distinguished] lineage and no wealth and so they did not accept him as king, because according to the generality the eligibility for kingship and leadership is through [the manifestation of] outer felicity, that is wealth and lineage, which is why their prophet warned them that eligibility is rather through the other two felicities, that of the spirit, which is knowledge and that of the body, which is increased physical strength and solid build and breadth, by saying [to them]: ‘*and He has increased him broadly in knowledge and body*, and God knows best who is fit for kingship and gives it [the kingship] *to whom He will; and God is Embracing*, great in gift, giving wealth as He gives kingship, *Knowing*, who is eligible and what wealth such [a person] would need to support himself and give it to him [accordingly]. He then makes it clear that [an individual’s] fitness for kingship entails another sign which is that [God’s] creatures submit to him and that awe of him and respect for him alight in their hearts and that their hearts are at peace with him, and that they love him and cede to his command in obedience and compliance; that is what the ancient Persians used to call *kboreh*<sup>38</sup> that was exclusive to the Kayanian [Persian] Kings. Thereafter, they called [this special aura] *farr*<sup>39</sup> and said that the *farr* of kingship was possessed by Fereydun; and that when it had disappeared from Kay Kāvus, they sought the one who possessed this *farr* and found it in the blessed King Kay Khusrau,<sup>40</sup> who then called it the *tābūt*, that is, the thing to which he would refer all matters — because *tābūt* is [based on the grammatical paradigm] *fa’lūt* from [the infinitive] *al-tawb* [to return]; in other words, there will come to you from this [*tābūt*] what will establish his kingship by way of submission, obedience, compliance and love for him which God will cast into your hearts — as the Prophet said, ‘I was given victory [over my enemies] through terror [being cast into their hearts] even [they happen to be] at a distance of one month’s journeying<sup>41</sup> — or [it meant] that to which he will refer in terms of his ego-centric

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<sup>38</sup> The kingly aura or magnetism associated with ancient Persian monarchs that derived from the royal communion with the Divine: see [ref needed]

<sup>39</sup> A variant, later Persian form, used to refer to the same concept of *kboreh*, a divine mystical power projected onto the appointed monarch.

<sup>40</sup> Kay Khusrau was Kay Kāvus’s grandson and successor. On all of these characters, see Ferdowsi’s *Shahnameh*.

<sup>41</sup> The *ḥadīth*, in Muslim’s *Ṣaḥīḥ*, mentions five other aspects in which the Prophet Muḥammad was favoured over all other prophets, including his intercession (*shafā’a*) and ‘the sum of all [excellent] speech’

condition and his [spiritual] configuration (*bay'a*), which will testify to the validity of his kingship.

[2:248] [*And their prophet said to them, 'The sign of his kingship is that there will come to you the Ark:'] in it is a Spirit of Peace from your Lord*, in other words, that in which your hearts will find peace, *and a remnant of what the folk of Moses and the folk of Aaron left behind*, among their descendants of the concept called *farr*, which is a light from the angelic realm by which the soul is illumined through its being joined to the angelic heavenly realm and receiving that effusion from the world of power, a requisite for the actualisation of the science of governance and the disposal of kingship and the wisdom created for it; *the angels bearing it*: in other words, it will come down to you through the medium of the heavenly angels. It is possible that this [*tābūt*] was a box containing a talismanic seal of the sort that would bring victory to the [king's] army, and other such royal talismans as are mentioned. It seems that it contained an image with a half human half feline head with a tail like a cat's, similar to the one that existed during the reign of Fereydun, called *Darafsh-e Kaviyan*.

[2:249] '*God will try you with a river*, the spring of the corporeal nature; *whoever drinks of it, is not of me*: meaning whoever gulps from it drinking in immoderation, because the people of [corporeal] nature and the worshippers of passions are lowlier and the most incapacitated of God's creatures, possessing not the strength to fight against the Goliath of the evil-commanding soul nor against Goliath the enemy of religion, since they possess neither [spiritual] zeal nor intensity [*and whoever tastes it not, he is of me*] *except for him who scoops up with his hand*, that is, except for the one who contents himself from it in the measure that necessity and need require, without covetousness and over-indulging in it.

*But they drank of it*, that is, they gulped away at it and became engrossed in it, *except a few of them*: for those who rise above the filth of [physical] nature and sanctify themselves against coming into contact with it and who disengage themselves from its coverings are few in comparison with those others. God, exalted be He, says *but few are they* [Q. 38:24] and *And few indeed of My servants are thankful* [Q. 34:13]: and these are the ones who believed with him [Saul] from among the people of certainty (*abl al-yaqīn*), those who knew with the certainty of their light that victory comes not with numbers but through divine assistance. Thus they remained steadfast in the face of what they saw with their own eyes because of the power of their certainty and were hence victorious:

*Scarcely is there one who when he is resolute in a matter which he seeks and takes steadfastness as his companion who does not then win a victory*

[2:255] *God, there is no god except Him*, in existence. So no matter what is worshipped other than Him, the worship that [actually] takes place is of Him alone, whether it is known or not, since there is no worshipped [being] nor existent except He; *the Living*, whose life is His very essence and all that is living lives only through His life; *the Eternal Sustainer*, is the One who subsists in Himself, and all that subsists does so through Him; were it not for His subsistence, nothing in existence would subsist. *[It] seizes Him not*, somnolence and drowsiness, as it does living creatures without their intending it, which can only be [the case] for one whose life is accidental, so that nature overwhelms him with an essential state seeking calm and rest and a replacement for the dissolution (*tablīl*) of the waking state. But as for Him whose life is His very Essence, that [state] is not possible for Him. He has made it clear that His life is not an accident in His words: *neither sleep*. For sleep is incompatible with a life being essential as it is the thing that most resembles death, which is why it is said that sleep is the brother of death. He who has no sleep on account of His Essence — because of it being precluded that His life is other than His Essence — undergoes no somnolence, since somnolence constitutes one of its [sleep's] preludes and effects. [It is] similar to when one says, 'He does not laugh, not even astonished'. His saying *slumber seizes Him not, neither sleep*, is an explanation of His being the Eternal Sustainer. *To Him belongs all that is in the heavens and the earth*: their fate<sup>42</sup> is in His hand; He does with them as He pleases. *Who is there that shall intercede with Him save by His leave?* Since everything belongs to Him and it is through Him that the one who speaks through Him speaks and with His speech, so how can they speak without His permission and His will? *He knows*, what is before them and what is after them, so how [can He not know] about them and their state? In other words, His knowledge encompasses all times and all individuals and all states, and thus He knows who is worthy of intercession and who is not worthy of it. *And they encompass nothing of His knowledge save such as He wills*, that is, [except for] what His will has required that He teach them. Thus the knowledge of every knower is something of His knowledge manifested in that locus, in the manner related by the angels when they said: *we do not have any knowledge except that which You have made us know* [Q. 2:32].

*His seat*, that is, His knowledge, *embraces the heavens and the earth*, since the *kursī* is place where knowledge is, which is the heart, as Abū Yazīd al-Bastāmī, may God have

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<sup>42</sup> Literally, 'their forelocks'.

mercy on him, said, 'If the world and everything in it a thousand thousand times over were located in some corner of the heart of the gnostic, he would not notice it, because of the extent of its [that heart's] embrace'. That is also why al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī said that His seat (*kursī*) is His throne (*'arsh*), drawing upon his [the Prophet's] saying, peace be upon him: 'The heart of the believer derives from the throne of (*'arsh*) God'. [The term] *kursī* in the classical language is a small *'arsh*, not larger than the seat on which a person sits: the heart is likened to it in order to convey an image in the imagination of its greatness and [the extent of] its embrace. As for the greater glorious throne, it is the First Spirit. The representation of both [the *'arsh* and the *kursī*] and their image in the witnessed [world] are [respectively] the greatest sphere and the eighth [sphere] which encompasses the seven heavens and all that is in them. *[It] wearies Him not*, that is, *the preserving of them*, does not weigh Him down, because they do not exist without Him such that the bearing of them [should then] weary Him. Rather, the whole of the supra-sensory world (*'ālam ma'nawī*) is His esoteric aspect and the formal world (*'ālam ṣuwarī*) is His exoteric aspect: these have no existence except through Him and are none other than Him. *He is the High*, in rank, whom nothing surpasses and who surpasses everything and overwhelms it through [its] annihilation; *the Tremendous*, the quintessence of whose greatness cannot be conceived. Any greatness that might be conceived in the case of a given thing is but a percolation of His greatness. Every great thing is so [only] because of a portion and a tremendous share that it receives from His greatness. Absolute greatness belongs exclusively to Him; indeed all greatness belongs to Him and no other has any share in it. This [verse] is the greatest verse in the Qur'ān because of the magnitude of what it demonstrates.

[2:256] *There is no compulsion in religion*, because in reality religion is the guidance that is acquired from the light of the heart that is a concomitant of the human primordial nature and that is required for the faith of certainty, as God, exalted be He, says: *so set your purpose for religion as a ḥanīf, a nature given by God, upon which He originated mankind. There is no changing God's creation. That is the upright religion* [Q. 30:30], and Islam, which is the exoteric aspect of religion, is built upon this [guidance] and is something in which compulsion can have no place. The proof that the esoteric and true aspect of religion is faith, just as its exoteric aspect and [outer] form is Islam, comes in what follows: *Rectitude has become clear*, that is, it is distinguished, *from error*, by means of clear proofs, for the one who possesses insight (*baṣīra*) and reason (*'aql*), as they say, 'The morning is bright for he who has eyes'; *so whoever disbelieves in the false deity*, that is, [in] what is other than God and denies its existence and its effect, *and believes in God*, a belief of witnessing and in truth, *has laid hold of the most firm*

*handle [that cannot be split]*, that is, he has held onto the Essential Unity whose ties and modes of operation are in of Itself, such that there is nothing firmer than It, since every thing that holds onto It is firmly attached, nay, every existence is existent through It and non-existent in itself. Thus if one were to consider such [a thing's] existence, then it is split (*infīṣām*) in itself because a contingent thing's attachment and existence is only through the Necessary [Existent]. When consideration [of this Existent] is severed from that [contingent] thing then that contingent's existence is terminated and is no longer anything in itself. This [Necessary Existent] cannot be split from the existence of His very essence since He does not entail divisibility (*tajazzu'*) or duality (*itbnayniyya*). There is a subtle detail in this [concept of] 'splitting' (*infīṣām*), which is that a splitting (*infīṣām*) is a breaking (*inkisār*) but without separation (*infīṣāl*). Since no contingent can be separated from His Essence, exalted be He, or remove itself from It — given that it would either be an act of His or an attribute of His — there can be absolutely no separation. Nay, if reason would consider such [a contingent] in isolation, it would appear split, that is lacking [independent] existence, its existence attached to His existence, exalted be He. *And God is Hearing*, hears the speech of those who have religion, *Knowing*, of their intentions and their faith.

[2:257] *God is the Protector of the believers*, taking charge of their affairs and their love [for Him]. *He brings them forth from*, the shadows of the attributes of the soul and the ambiguities (*shubuhāt*) of the imagination and estimation into the light of certainty and guidance and [into] the space of the world of spirits. *And the disbelievers — their protectors are*, those whom they worship besides God, *that bring them forth*, from the light of preparedness and the guidance inherent in the primordial nature into the shadows of the attributes of the soul and [into] uncertainties and doubts.

[2:259] *Or such as he who passed by a town*: in other words, have you considered the example of he who passed by a town whose inhabitants had perished under its fallen roofs and collapsed walls, and who then marvelled that it could be brought back to life, being as he was a wayfaring seeker who had not yet attained the station of certainty and had not been prepared to receive the light of the self-disclosure of the Life-giver. The most widespread opinion is that this [man] was Ezra. *So God made him die*, that is, He made him subsist upon a death of ignorance, just as He said *our Lord You have caused us to die twice* [Q. 40:11], according to [the interpretation of] one opinion, and He also said *when you were dead and He gave you life* [Q. 2:28], *a hundred years*: it is possible that in their time a single year was based on the lunar cycle, making it 8 [proper] years and 4 months; or it could have been based on the seasons of the year, making it 25 years, and [it is also possible] that at that time their spans of life were [considerably] longer; *then*

*He raised him up*, with true life and asked him to consider the period he had tarried; he did not think that it had been longer than a day or part of a day, deeming insignificant the duration of time he had tarried in that death of ignorance which is finite in relation to everlasting life and also because he did not sense the passing of this period, as with one who is asleep and oblivious to the passage of time. Then after he had reflected, God pointed out to him how long the period of ignorance and the death of obliviousness had been by [informing him] that it had been a hundred years. Or [it could be understood] that He made him die through voluntary death during one of the periods mentioned so that the period then represents the time spent in spiritual discipline, wayfaring and struggling in the way of God. Or [still] that He made him die a natural death such that his spirit became attached to the body of another of his own genus in order to acquire perfection either after a certain period or immediately until one of the three mentioned periods had passed without him looking into his state, unaware of his origination and his [ultimate] return: in this way he had been dead throughout his actual life. He then looked into his state through the light of knowledge and came to know his origination and his return. As for his words: *'I have tarried a day, or part of a day'*, these are similar to God's statement [elsewhere] *And on the day when We shall gather them as if they had not tarried but an hour of the day* [Q. 10:45],<sup>43</sup> and His statement *The day they see it, it will be as if they had only tarried for an evening or the morning thereof* [Q. 79:46], and His statement *And on the Day when the Hour comes the guilty shall swear that they had not tarried more than an hour* [Q. 30:55]: all of that is because of their obliviousness to the passage of time. Similar is the case of one who after having parted with a brother or a companion or some such thing is reunited after a lengthy period of separation: it will be as if that period had never been, for he no longer senses it after it has passed [and he has been reunited], even though he may have suffered its hardship before the reunion. *Look at your food and drink, it has not spoiled*: they say that his food was figs and grapes, his drink wine and milk. Figs are an allusion to the universal objects of perception since they are made up totally of kernels and since the particulars that are in them are there potentially, just like the seeds that are in the figs. Grapes are an allusion to the particulars because material appendages remain with them upon perception, such as the dregs of the juice and its seeds. Milk is an allusion to beneficial knowledge, such as the prescriptions of the divine law. Wine is an allusion to the fervent love [of the divine], will, the gnostic sciences and the realities. 'It has not spoiled': in other words it has not changed from what has been since pre-eternity in

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<sup>43</sup> The first person plural, as opposed to the third person singular, is historically the reading of all Qur'ān reciters, with the exception of 'Āṣim (cf. Ibn Mujaḥid, *Qirā'āt*, 327).



accordance with the primordial nature, deposited as it is within you. Indeed these various aspects of knowledge are stored within every soul in accordance with its preparedness, as he [the Prophet], peace be upon him, has said: ‘Mankind are minerals like gold and silver minerals. Even if they are veiled by [other] materials and are hidden for periods of time as they endure fluctuation in the shadows of *barzakhs*,<sup>44</sup> they are not spoiled and do not change their state, such that when the veil is removed through the purity of the heart, they manifest themselves as they had once been. That is why he [the Prophet], peace be upon him, said: ‘Wisdom is a believer’s ultimate goal’. ***And look at your ass***, that is, [at] your body in its present state, according to the first and second interpretation; according to a third it means [look at your ass] how its bones have crumbled and wasted; ***so that We might make you a sign for people***, that is, and so that We might make you a proof of [the truth of] the resurrection for people, We resurrected you. ***And look at the bones, how We shall set them up***, how We shall make them become upright, ***and then clothe them with flesh***’: in both aspects the meaning is obvious [enough], for when he is resurrected and comes to know his state and his disengagement from his body, he will know that his body is composite by [the act of] the bones being raised, gathered and clothed with flesh. ***So, when it***, the gathering forth and the resurrection, ***was made clear to him, he said, ‘I know that God has power over all things’***.

[2:260] ***And when Abraham said, ‘My Lord show me how You give life to the dead’***, in other words, make me attain the station of eyewitnessing at the station of certain knowledge, which is why his faith was affirmed with the [use of the] affirmative interrogative *hamza* [a-] in ***He said, ‘Why [a-wa-lam] do you not believe?’***, that is, do you not know that for certain, to which Abraham, peace be upon him, responded by saying: ***‘Yes, but so that my heart may be re-assured’***, that is, so that it may be at peace and its reassurance may be actualised as a result of the eyewitnessing, for the eye of certainty brings about reassurance but not [certain] knowledge. ***Said He, ‘Take four birds***: that is, the four faculties that prevented him from the station of the eyewitnessing and the witnessing of the true life. They say that these [four birds] were a peacock, a cock, a raven and a dove or, according to another version, a duck. The peacock represents wonder, the cock passion, the raven ravenousness, the dove love of this world as it consists of its home and its nest; it would appear that [the fourth bird] was a duck, which would then constitute an allusion to the covetousness that is its predominant characteristic; ***and twist them to you***, that is, tilt them and draw them

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<sup>44</sup> On the concept of the *barzakh*, see Chittick 1989: 117-118, 125. Also *EI2*, ‘*barzakh*’, I, 1071; *EQ*, ‘*barzakh*’, I, 204.

towards you by restraining them and preventing them from going forth in pursuit of pleasures and inclining to their habits. It is said that he was commanded to slaughter them, pluck out their feathers and mix their flesh and blood by pounding them together, but to keep their heads with him, in other words, to prevent them from their acts and remove their configurations from the soul, to suppress their motivations, natures and habits through spiritual discipline, retaining in them [only] their fundamentals; *then set a part of them on every mountain*, that is, from among the mountains that are in your presence, namely the four elements which are the pillars of his body. In other words, suppress them and make them die so that nothing remains but the fundamentals centred in your existence and the substances thereof that are deposited in the very natures of the elements that are within you. There seven mountains which accordingly allude to the seven limbs that constitute the parts of the body; *then summon them*: in other words, if you become alive through their life, then they are disobedient and dominate you, wild, reluctant to accept your command and so if you kill them you will then be alive with the true life that is bestowed [by God] after annihilation and effacement, whereupon they become alive through your life, and not through their own life, the life of the soul that is obedient to you, compliant with your command such that if you [now] summon them, *they will come to you in haste. And know that God is Mighty*, victorious in vanquishing [disobedient] souls, *Wise*, vanquishing them only through wisdom. It [the verse] can also be understood as referring to the gathering of beasts and birds, in which case the [act of] setting the parts of these [birds] on the mountains represents the nourishment of the body through these [attributes] and his [Abraham's] summoning them and their coming to him in haste represents their orientation towards man after the resurrection.

[2:261] *The likeness of those who expend their wealth in the way of God*: Glory be to Him, He mentions three types of expenditure and assigns greater merit for some over others in terms of recompense. The first of these is to expend in the way of God, which is to expend in the world of the kingdom against the self-disclosure of the acts which a person does so that God might reward him and He rewards him seven hundred times what he had given, multiplying it [for him] manifold without limit in accordance with His wish because His hand, exalted be He, is infinitely more open [in generosity] and outreaching than his. *And God is Embracing*, of great gift, whose gift cannot be compared to ours, *Knowing*, the intentions of givers and their [varying] convictions that such [gifts] are a result of God's favour and so He rewards them accordingly. The second [type of expenditure] is to expend against the station of the witnessing of the attributes in the manner that will be mentioned, which is to expend for the sake of

God's satisfaction, in the same way that the former [type of expenditure] is to expend for the sake of acquiring God's gift. The third [type] is to expend through God which is against the station of the presential vision of the Essence.

[2:262] [*Those who expend their wealth in the way of God*] *then do not follow up their expenditure with reminder of their generosity and injury*: He [here] warns that expenditure is invalidated by reminding [the recipient] of one's generosity and injury, because expenditure is praiseworthy in all three instances as long as it is in harmony with God's command, exalted be He, and that it removes the vice of greed from the soul of the expender and that it benefits and comforts the deserving [recipient]. But when the [giving] person reminds [the recipient] of his favour, he has then contravened God's command, because such [behaviour] is forbidden, and his soul has manifested itself in arrogance and presumptuous reliance on this blessing with conceit, veiling itself with its [conceited] act and deeming that the blessing is from itself as opposed to from God. All of these are vile traits, more base than greed, that attach themselves to that person: had he only see himself in terms of him being the source of that virtue, it would have sufficed him that that [virtue] was invalidated.<sup>45</sup> As for the third aspect [of expenditure] from the point of view of the one deserving it, the act is invalidated by any injury since that is incompatible with comfort or benefit; the reminder of one's generosity also invalidates that act because it entails haughtiness and the manifestation of artificiality and establishes blame upon that person. He then says:

[2:263] *Honourable words and forgiveness are better than a voluntary almsgiving followed by injury*, because kind words, even in [a negative] response, delights the heart and revives the spirit. As for the voluntary act of charity, it benefits his body and delights the heart but only secondarily and upon the imagining the [subsequent] benefit. When what benefits the body is compared to what injures the spirit, any [potential] benefit is sullied and spoiled and does not materialise [as anticipated] in return for the delight that would result from kind words, even if it is not spoiled [in the first place] because spiritual matters are nobler, more beautiful and have a greater impact upon the soul; *and God is Independent*, [without need] of any act of charity that is accompanied by injury and He gives the deserving person from the storehouses of His Unseen, *Forbearing*, not hastening to punish [the evildoer].

[2:265] *But the likeness of those who expend their wealth seeking God's good pleasure*: this is the second category of expenditure, which He has given greater merit than the first

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<sup>45</sup> The point is that such a person makes matters worse when he then proceeds to remind the recipient of his charity of the latter's indebtedness to him.

by likening it to a garden, since the garden by yielding its produce remains upon the [same] state, unlike the grain [of corn]. Thus He alludes to it as [a constant source of] wealth for them, as though it [the expenditure] were an essential attribute [of such individuals], which is why He says, *and to confirm their souls*, in other words, to make them settle permanently upon [the attribute of] generosity, which is an attribute of the Lord. As for His saying: *upon a bill*, that is an allusion to the elevated rank of this [type of] expenditure and its ascendancy over the degree of the first [type]; *a torrent*, that is, a great share of the Merciful's attribute of mercy, *smites it*, as well as a generous reinforcement from the effusion of His generosity, because it [this attribute] is the trait that connects to God, exalted be He, by the interrelationship of the attribution and the preparedness to receive this attribute and to acquire it as an attribute; *and if no torrent smites it*, that is, [it does not receive] a great share, *then [dew]*, only a small share; *and all that you do God sees*, [seeing] from which perspective your deeds are performed.

[2:266] *Would any of you wish*: this is a simile of a state entailing a good deed, be it an [act of] expenditure or otherwise, through which one draws near to God and seeks His satisfaction — as is the case with this category of expenditure. But then his soul manifests itself in this [deed] and stirs so that its stirrings, which are at variance with the motion of the spirit, and its motives, which are different and in opposition to the exigency of the heart, become like a torrent. Satan then exploits its stirrings and makes these a means for his evil whisperings so that he breathes into it [the soul] the seeing of its deed or making a show [of it]. That breath is thus like a fire that consumes his deed, despite his dire need for it, as the commander of the believers 'Alī, peace be upon him, said: 'O God forgive me that [deed] by which I draw near to You but which my heart then disagrees with'.

[2:267] [*O you who believe*] *expend of the good things you have earned*: He commands the third category of expenditure, of the good things that you have earned, because the one who chooses through God chooses the most noble in all things on account of the correspondence [of that noble thing to God], just as the commander of the believers 'Alī, peace be upon him, said: 'Verily God is beautiful and loves beauty'. The one who expends through [the stirrings of] his soul is unable to expend what is the most noble because of the niggardliness of the soul and its love of that [which is most noble] and its preferring it for itself instead of singling it out for God: thus what is done through the soul cannot be piety from the outset, because of what God, exalted be He, says *you will not attain piety until you expend of what you love* [Q. 3:92]; *and seek not the corrupt of it for your expending*, singling it out for your expending as is the habit of those who expend through their souls and their [physical] nature; *for you would never take it*

*yourselves without closing your eyes to it*, because of your love of the best of possessions for your selves given that your love of self is exclusively dedicated to such [acquisitions], which is why you do not give preference to expend wealth for the sake of God over them and [why you do not] expend the best for Him; *and know that God is Self-sufficient*, so acquire His attribute of sufficiency which will then give you an abundance that will avail you of wealth and the love of it, *Laudable*: He does only what is laudable, so make Him your exemplar.

[2:268] *Satan promises you poverty and enjoins you to indecency*, that is, [to] the despicable trait, which is niggardliness; so seek refuge from him in God for He, *promises you pardon from Him*, that the attributes [of His] conceal your souls by His light, *and bounty*, a bestowal for you from among the bestowals and self-disclosures of His attributes, such as absolute sufficiency so that you never have fear of poverty; *and God is Embracing*, embracing your essences, your attributes and your gifts. His gift, however, never reduces the extent of His generosity and His gifts are never exhausted, *Knowing*, where His self-disclosures fall and the [extent of] the preparedness and the deservingness of these [souls of yours].

[2:269] *He gives wisdom to whomever He will*, when that person expends sincerely and is doing it with God [in mind], and so He gives him wisdom of expenditure so that he might expend of [this] divine wisdom qualified as he is by His attributes; *and he who is given wisdom, has been given much good*, because it is the attribute most specific to God; *yet none remembers*, that wisdom is the noblest of things and the most [God-]specific of attributes, *but the people of pith*, whose intellects God has illumined by the light of guidance and thus rid it of the blemishes of estimation and the rind of descriptions and habits that is the soul. The reward for the first [type of] expenditure is the doubling [of the reward]. The reward for the second is Paradise of the attributes that yields the fruits of doubled [rewards]. The reward for the third is the wisdom that is the concomitant of existence and the one endowed [with it]: consider then how very different each [type] is.

[2:270] *And whatever expenditure you expend, and whatever vow you make, surely God knows it*, [knows] which type it is and rewards you accordingly. *For the evildoers*, those who expend to make a show before people, who expend in the wrong way, or who diminish what is their due by contemplating their expenditure or combining it with reminder [of one's favour] or injury, or by expending of what is vile: *they have no helpers*, to protect them from the might of God.

[2:271] *[If you proclaim your voluntary almsgivings, it is a fine thing; but if you conceal them, and give them to the poor] that is even better for you:* because of this being far removed from making a show and closer to sincerity [of intention].

[2:272] *You are not responsible for guiding them,* to the three types of expenditure mentioned that are free of reminder, injury, making a show, contemplating the expenditure and its being out of vile [sources]. In other words, you are not responsible for making them guided, rather your responsibility is solely to deliver the [means to] guidance; *but God guides whomever He will. And whatever good you expend it is for yourselves,* and so why remind people [of the favour] and harm them? *for then you are expending desiring only God's Face,* so what is with you that you act arrogantly in this with people and how can you make a show of it? *And whatever good you expend, shall be repaid to you in full,* none other than you will have a share of it. So in reality do not expend except upon yourselves and not others so that as a result of this [expenditure] nothing of yours is diminished. Why then do you seek to expend of what is vile. Thus the three [types of expenditure] belong to the three categories of expenditure mentioned and by providing similes of the purpose behind them this is a way of warning against the [potential] ruin [that can result] from them.

[2:273] *For the poor,* in other words, target the poor with your charity, *those who are,* constrained by the struggle, *in the way of God; and they are unable to journey in the land,* in order to engage in commerce or earn [livelihood] because of their preoccupation with God and their being absorbed in their states, spending their moments in devotions: *the ignorant man supposes them, rich because of their abstinence,* from begging and having no need of people; *but you shall know them by their mark,* by the paleness of their faces, the light of their foreheads and the configurations of their facial expressions, that they are gnostics, indigent, the folk of God: only God knows them and who belongs with them. *They do not beg of men importunately,* that is, by persisting, meaning that they do not beg people at all, as when they say, '[One] upon an open road but cannot be guided even by a light', where both the light and the ability to be guided are being precluded. Or [what is meant by the verse] is the preclusion of [their begging with] importunity but the affirmation of their provoking sympathy when begging. *And whatever good you expend,* that is, regardless of whom you expend on, whether a rich person or a poor one, *surely God has knowledge of it,* that is, [knowledge] of whether that expenditure is for that person or another and rewards [you] accordingly.

[2:274] *Those who expend,* [here] He first refers to [any] expenditure in general, then secondly [He refers to it] according to the time [of day] and state, so that it might be

known that there is no difference therein, rather it is [only different] according to purpose or intention.

[2:275] *Those who devour usury shall not rise again*, to the end of this [statement]: the devourer of usury is worse off in terms of his state than any grave sinner. For, every thing that a person earns constitutes a [source of] dependence in some way in terms of his livelihood, be that [earning] small or great, as is the case with a merchant or a farmer or an artisan since they have not designated their [sources of] provision by their power of reason, nor was it designated for them prior to its being earned, and so in reality they are upon something of which they have no knowledge of, as the Prophet said: ‘God refuses to provide for the believer except from where he knows not’. As for the one who consumes [through] usury, he has had his source of earning and provision designated, whether the consumer profits or makes a loss; he is veiled from his Lord by his own soul and from his provision by its being designated: in effect he has no dependence on it whatsoever. Thus God, exalted be He, has made him dependent upon his soul and his reason and has removed him from His protection and preservation such that the jinn have seized him and possessed him and on the day of resurrection he shall rise with no connection between him and God, unlike other people who will be connected to Him through [their] trust (*tawakkul*) in Him. Thus he will be like the demented one made prostrate by Satan unable to guide himself in any direction; *that is because they say*, in other words, that is because they veiled themselves behind their [false] analogy, and the first to make such a [false] analogy was Satan and so they will be among his companions, outcasts like him.<sup>46</sup>

[2:276] *God effaces usury*, even if it should outwardly seem like an increase, *but He augments voluntary almsgivings with interest*, even if it should be a diminution in the [state of] witnessing. That is because increase and diminution are so only when one considers their consequences and benefit in both abodes [this and the next]. Wealth that results from usury entails no blessedness because it has been acquired through the contravention of the truth and hence its consequence is an evil one as that person is committing all manner of disobedient acts because every thing consumed generates, by its very consumption, motivations and acts of the same [evil] kind. Thus if it is illicit it drives that person to illicit acts; if it is reprehensible, then [it drives him] to reprehensible acts; [likewise] if it is permitted, then [it drives him] to permitted acts; if it is consumption from a surplus, then [it drives him] to recommended acts and his acts

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<sup>46</sup> The false analogy that Satan made was when he objected to God’s command to prostrate himself before Adam, arguing that God had created him, Satan, from fire which was superior to Adam’s clay [cf. Q. 38:76].

are voluntary extras and favours; and if it should be simply what is mandatory in terms of what is due, then his acts will be mandatory and necessary; if it should be from surpluses or [unanticipated] shares, then his acts will correspond accordingly. Therefore, the sin for usury and the effects of his illicit acts generated by his consumption [of usury] shall fall upon that person, in the way mentioned in the *ḥadīth*: 'A sinful act that follows a sinful act is punishment for the former sinful act'. His punishments and sins accumulate continuously while God ruins his wealth in this world such that neither his progeny nor his children and he ends up being among those who have forfeited this world and the Hereafter, that which constitutes total effacement. As for the one who gives voluntary alms, because his wealth is purified, God blesses it so that it bears much fruit as well as retaining for the person the original [reward for the act]. The consumer of such [good acts] can only be an obedient individual in terms of his acts. His wealth will remain for his offspring and his children a source of benefit [for them]: that is the true increase. And even if the only increase [gained] were that it was expended in obedience of God, that would suffice as an increase. For what increase is more excellent than that which remains with God. [Similarly] if the only diminution from usury were that it contravened God and entailed the commission of what He has forbidden, that would suffice as a diminution, for what diminution is more abominable than that which causes the person to be veiled from [God] and his chastisement and the loss of his share [of the Hereafter] with God. *God loves not any guilty ingrate*, that is, the devourer of usury, ungrateful and guilty in this act of his and God loves not such a person.

[2:284] *To God belongs all that is in the heavens*, that is, all that is in the spiritual world in its entirety, His esoteric aspects, His attributes and the covers of His Unseen and the treasure-troves of His generosity, *and all that is in the earth*, that is, all that is in the corporeal world in its entirety, His exoteric aspects, His names and His acts witness the two worlds witness while He is witness of all things. *Whether you disclose what is in your souls*, He witnesses it through His names and His exoteric aspects and knows it and requites you for it, and if you hide it, He witnesses through His attributes and His esoteric aspects and knows it and requites you for it, *then He will forgive whom He wishes*, on account of that person's affirmation of [His] Oneness and the power of his certainty and that his misdeeds had been accidental and had not taken deep roots in his essence. God's wish is based on His wisdom; *and He will chastise whom He wishes*, on account of that person's corrupt inner conviction and his harbouring of doubt or the misdeeds that have taken deep root in his soul. *And God has power over all things*, and hence has the power to both to forgive and to chastise.



[2:285] *The Messenger believes in what was revealed to him from his Lord*: he has confirmed it by receiving it and assuming the character traits mentioned in it — as ‘Ā’isha said: ‘His [the Prophet’s] character was that of the Qur’ān’ — and his [spiritual] elevation and realisation by means of its significations; *and the believers; each one believes in God*, each one alone in totality, *and in His angels, and in His Books, and His messengers*, each one along in differentiation upon becoming upright, witnessing His Oneness in the form of that multiplicity, ascribing a wisdom to each one of His self-disclosures in one of His loci; *‘we make no distinction*: in other words, they say, ‘we do not distinguish between any of them [either] by rejecting some or accepting others. Nor do we doubt that they are upon the truth and [sent] with the truth on account of [their] witnessing of the Oneness and [our] witnessing of the truth in them through the truth. *And they say, ‘We hear*: that is, we have responded to our Lord with respect to His books, messengers and the sending down of His angels and we are upright in our behaviour; *Your forgiveness, our Lord*: that is, forgive us our existences and attributes and efface them through Your existence and the existence of Your attributes, *to You is the homecoming*’, through the annihilation in You.

[2:286] *God charges no soul save to its capacity*: He does not make it bear except what it has the capacity for and does not constrain therewith its endurance and its preparedness for [His] self-disclosures. For each person’s share of the unveilings and self-disclosures is [commensurate with] what can be borne by the receptacle of his preparedness with which he has been endowed from pre-eternity [that stemmed] from the holiest effusion and will not constrain him; *for it is what it is has merited*, in the way of good things, knowledge, perfections and unveilings, wherever these be found, whether it be intentional on its [the soul’s] part or unintentional, since these things derived from the world of light: good things are entirely essential to it [the soul] and their benefit returns to it [the soul], unlike the evil things, such as ignorance, despicable traits, acts of disobedience and deficiencies, which are dark affairs, alien to its [the soul’s] substance and cannot harm it nor can their consequences befall it unless the soul is attracted to them, intentionally seeking them and actively acquiring them, which is why it is said in the *ḥadīth* that the guardian [angel] of the right records every good deed that issues from that person immediately, whereas the guardian of the left waits for six hours to pass before recording anything and if the person seeks forgiveness within these [six hours], repents and is remorseful, then nothing is recorded; but if that person persists, it is recorded. What is meant by the soul here [in this verse] is the essence, for otherwise the matter would be the converse. Therefore the significance [of the verse] is that He does not charge it except what it can bear and what is eased for it in the way of

works regardless of the extent of the effort and the power [involved]. [The form] *kasb* is mentioned in the context of ‘good’ because it [signifies that the soul] is not concerned with it nor active in seeking it; [the form] *al-iktisāb* is mentioned in the context of ‘evil’ because it [signifies that the soul] is attracted to it and active in and intentionally seeking it, given that it is a repository of evil.<sup>47</sup> *Our Lord, take us not to task if we forget, Your covenant, or err*, when we act other than in Your cause or that of the Qur’ān in order to part with You and be veiled from You, for we are strangers, remote [from You], for a long time journeying away from You, tried through the darknesses by all sorts of afflictions and we have neither value nor measure in Your presence until You have taken us to task for our sins; *our Lord, burden us not with a load*, in our selves, our attributes and our actions such that You burden us and imprison us in our places, banished from You, for there is nothing more burdensome than such [a predicament]; *such as You did lay upon those before us*, from among those who veiled themselves with the outward aspects of acts or the inward aspects of the attributes. *Our Lord, do not burden us beyond what we have the power to bear*, of the burden of banishment and privation from Your contact and the witnessing of Your beauty by the veiling of Your majesty; *and pardon us*, the evil of our deeds and attributes, for all of these are evils that have veiled us from You and have deprived us from the cool of Your pardon and the pleasure of Your satisfaction; *and forgive us*, the sins of our existence, for these are the gravest of grave sins, as has been said:

‘If I were to say, “I have not sinned”, it [my soul] would respond saying, “your very existence is a sin incomparable to any other sin’

*and have mercy on us*, by [granting us] the existence that is bestowed after annihilation. *You are our Patron*, our Helper and the Guardian of our affairs, *so grant us assistance*, for it is the duty of the patron to assist his subject; or [You are] our Master, and it is the duty of the master to assist his slaves; *against the disbelieving ones*, from among the faculties of our commanding souls and [from] their attributes and the hosts of the satans of our estimations and imaginations, which are veiled from You and veil us [from You] through their disbelief and darkness.

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<sup>47</sup> The statement here bears on the syntactical nuances of the Arabic verb forms brought out by the difference in emphasis between the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 8<sup>th</sup> forms of the root *k-s-b* from the point of view of the subject, the person doing ‘the earning’. The 8<sup>th</sup> verbal form (*ifta’ala*) generally connotes a more active and intentional act on the part of the person.

### [3] Āl ʿImrān

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[3:1] *Alif Lām Mīm.*

[3:2] *God! There is no god except Him, the Living, the Eternal:* the interpretation of this [verse] has already been [given].

[3:3] *He has revealed to you the Book by the truth,* He has elevated you from level to level and from grade to grade by sending down the Book to you showing the way to the knowledge of the affirmation of the Oneness which is the Truth with respect to the union called the Gathering-intellect (‘*aql qirānī*’),<sup>48</sup> *confirming what was before it*, of the pre-eternal affirmation of Oneness that has preceded, and which is known in the first covenant that is stored in the Unseen of preparedness, *and He revealed the Torah and the Gospel,*

[3:4] *before*, in that way, [*as guidance to people*] then, *He revealed the Criterion*, that is, the differentiated affirmation of Oneness with respect to the dispersion called the Differentiating-intellect (‘*aql furqānī*’), which is the source of uprightness and the starting point of the mission. *As for those who disbelieve in God’s signs*, that is, those who have veiled themselves from these two aspects of the affirmation of the Oneness by the loci of manifestation and the engendered things which in reality constitute the signs of the affirmation of the Oneness, *for them awaits a terrible chastisement*, by way of distance and privation, *for God is Mighty*, that is, vanquishing, *Lord of Retribution:* whose description cannot be made nor its quintessence fathomed nor its like be paralleled by any retributer.

[3:5] *Truly God, nothing whatever is hidden from Him*, in the worlds, knowing as He does the times and places of retribution.

[3:7] [*He it is Who revealed to you the Book*] *wherein are verses [that are] clear*, above that they should be susceptible to polyvalence or ambiguity, supporting only one meaning, *forming the Mother*, that is, the original, *Book, and others ambiguous*, supporting two or more meanings and in whose case truth and falsehood are ambiguous. That is because the Truth, exalted be He, has one face which is the absolute abiding face after the annihilation of creation and which does not allow for

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<sup>48</sup> Read as *qirānī*, from the root *q-r-n* (*qarana*) to ‘bring together’, which some early authorities suggested was the basis of the word Qurʾān, as opposed to its being from *q-r-*, ‘to recite’. The point here is that the Qurʾān, as evidenced by its two names (*al-Qurʾān* and *al-Furqān*) gathers all things (cf. *jamʿ*), including previous scriptures, and separates all things, hence the reality of multiplicity necessary for degrees of excellence (*tafāḍul*): cf. Chittick 1989: 363. These two terms also reflect the Qurʾān’s teaching about God, that He is at once incomparable (*laysa ka-mithlibi shayʿ*) yet similar (through His attributes).

multiplicity or plurality. He also has multiple additional faces, a plurality in accordance with the mirrors of the loci of manifestation, and these [faces] are what become manifest of that one face according to the preparedness of each locus of manifestation, in these [faces] truth can become enmeshed in falsehood. The revelation came in this manner so that the ambiguous [verses] turn towards the faces of the many forms of preparedness and thus every one attaches to that which is appropriate to it and the testing and trial become manifest. As for the verifying gnostics who know the abiding face in whatever form or figure it may take, they know the true face from the faces conveyed by the ambiguous verses and so they refer these back to the clear [unambiguous] verses, exemplifying the saying of the poet:

‘The face is but one, except that if you were to number its virtues, they [the faces] seem to be many’

*As for*, the veiled, *those in whose hearts is deviation*, from the truth, *they follow the ambiguous part*, because of their veiling themselves from the unity by multiplicity — whereas the verifiers follow the clear part and make the ambiguous follow [from] it — [and because of] their choosing thus from the many potential senses that which suits their religion and their school, *desiring sedition*, that is, seeking to be misguided and to misguide, that being the very path which they follow, *and desiring its interpretation*, according to what suits their situation and their method: ‘If the knife is skewed, it will skew its scabbard’. And so just as they do not know the abiding face among the [many] faces, it is necessarily the case that they do not know the true meaning from among the [various] meanings. Thus their veil increases and becomes denser so that they might merit thereby [God’s] chastisement; *and none knows its interpretation except God and those firmly rooted in knowledge*: those who possess knowledge [are able to] know through His knowledge, that is to say, God knows it [all] as a totality and in differentiated mode. *They say, ‘We believe in it*: they affirm God’s knowledge through it, as they have knowledge through the light of faith; *it is all from our Lord*’, because for them ‘all’ has the meaning of ‘one’ without difference; *yet none remembers*, that one knowledge differentiated into multiple ambiguous detail, except those whose intellects have become pure by the light of guidance and have become disengaged from the rind of caprice and habit.

[3:8] *Our Lord, do not cause [our hearts] to deviate*, from orienting [themselves] towards Your Side and hastening to seek Your encounter and to stand by Your gate, by the temptation of the love of this world and the overpowering of caprice and the inclining towards the soul and its attributes and to stand content with its shares and its pleasures, *after You have guided us*, by Your light to Your straight path and the upright religion, and by the glories of Your face to Your glorious beauty, *and give us from You a*

*mercy*, from Your Merciful Name (*rahīmiyya*), that will efface our attributes through Your attributes and our darknesses by Your lights. ***You indeed are the Bestower.***

[3:9] ***Our Lord, You shall gather mankind for a day of which there is no doubt***, that is, He will gather them for the Day of Gathering which is the arrival at the station of the unity that comprehends the entirety of creation, the first and the last, such that they shall have no lingering doubt in that locus of witnessing of theirs.

[3:10] ***[As for the disbelievers] neither their riches nor their children will avail them against God***, nay, these are the cause of their being veiled and their distance from God and their being chastised by His chastisement because of the intensity of their attachment to these [things] and their love of these.

[3:13] ***There has already been a sign for you***, O wayfaring folk, [a sign] that is proof of your perfection and your attainment of the affirmation of Oneness, ***in two hosts that met, one group***, constituting the spiritual faculties, which are God's folk and His hosts, ***fighting in the way of God; and another***, constituting the hosts of the soul and the assistants of the devils who are veiled from the Truth. You will see the former group twice the number of these [latter] when the two [groups] meet one another in the battle of the body, [and that is] because of the former group is aided by the light of God and His granting of success, while the latter group is forsaken and abased, incapable, too weak and severed from the world of [divine] aid and power. Thus the former group defeat the latter and subdue them with God's aid and assistance, and expend their property, namely, the objects of their perception and the objects of their knowledge in for the cause of knowing God and affirming His Oneness; ***for God confirms with His help whom He will***, from among the recipients of His solicitude who are prepared for His encounter. ***Surely in that is a lesson***, that is, a consideration or something to be considered in order to arrive at the truth for those endowed with the faculty of vision, the eyes of whose insights have been opened and coloured by the light of the certainty that comes from knowledge, from among the people of the spiritual path (*ṭarīqa*), by which they consider their states at the end.

[3:14] ***Beautiful for mankind is love of lusts***, because man is composite of the higher world and the lower one, and from the time of his configuration and his birth, his primordial nature is veiled and the fire of his instinct subsides, while the light of his insight is extinguished by the veils of nature and the corporeal coverings and the bitter water of sensual pleasures as well as the tempestuous winds of animal lusts so that he becomes abandoned by the Truth in the abodes of estrangement and the habitations of darkness, carried along through trials of various kinds of toils and troubles, when suddenly he finds a shimmering light of discernment and a flash of lightning from the world of the intellect and a summoner [all of which are] calling him away from caprice

and Satan and so he falls [this summoner] and chances upon an exalted waystation and an elegant garden in which there is all that the souls can desire and the eyes can delight in. He takes up his abode therein, grateful for his effort and satisfied with his [new] dwelling, saying:

‘When the morning comes the people praise their night journeying, while the summoner has prepared for them a hospitable reception’.

Such is the love of lusts, that is [the love of] the mentioned desired things and the way that these are made beautiful for him, which is an enjoyment given to him in accordance with how much he has of the lower world and of perfection for his life [in this world] by which he has been veiled from the enjoyment of the life of the Hereafter and its perfection in accordance with how much he has of the higher world, while he is inattentive to the fact that this [latter] is more splendid and more pleasurable, purer for that matter and more abiding, which is the meaning of His words: *but God — with Him is the more excellent abode*. If the divinely-granted success and the alerting of the inner secret should reach him, in conjunction with the prophetic apprising, as He says: [3:15] *Say: ‘Shall I tell you of something better than that?’*, then there will issue forth from his interior a yearning and a fervent love because of the motion of the higher part towards its focus: his fire that had subsided re-ignites and there cascade upon him in succession flashes of the divine lights and the risings of the holy illuminations, such that the light of his insight that had been extinguished is now illumined and the veils that had prevented his primordial nature from seeking the [true] resting-place and the [ultimate] abode become thin; the life which he leads is spoiled and his way becomes sullied and what he had deemed pure of the life of this world now seems dark; the vehemence of caprice subsides by the subduing of the spiritual part the corporeal one. He now tastes the sweet water of true life and no longer has patience for the bitter salty one and his heart pursues the inclinations of certainty after the small draughts which he imbibed from the running spring water, knowing [now] that it had been hidden beneath the earth. He seeks the radiance of the light of the stars at night deeming it to be day and exits therefrom whereupon he finds himself in open country wherein the water is brackish and various kinds of grasses such as weeds and watercress. He thinks these aromatic plants and fruits but at this discovery he finds himself barred from the light of the sun and the various scents and fruits; thereupon he resolves to depart for the return [to the spiritual] but he is overcome by the loneliness of estrangement [from what he has seen]; yet he guards against what he has deemed good and delightful and journeys on leaving it behind until the day when the morning light of the eye of certainty shines forth and it is time for the rising of the sun of the unity, he sees a garden the vision of which perplexes his eyesight and the description of which dazzles

his intellect and so it is the like of which no eye has ever seen, no ear has ever heard nor has ever occurred to the mind of man. And when he awakes and the sun has risen, he will find therein close friends and beloved ones and he will know that that [place] is his final lodging and abode. Intimacy will return to him and he takes his place in the waystation of holiness in the enduring abode in the vicinity of the Forgiving King the glories of whose noble face shine upon him and the spirit of the all-comprehensive satisfaction permeates his heart. That is the meaning of His words:

*For those that are fearful, with their Lord there are Gardens underneath which rivers flow*, to where He says, *and God is Seer of His servants*. Thus the Gardens are the gardens of the acts, while the spouses (*azwāj*) are classes of spiritual beings from the world of the holiness; the Satisfaction (*riḍwān*) is the gardens of the attributes.

[3:16] *Those who say: "O, Our Lord, we believe*, in the lights of Your acts and attributes, *so forgive us our sins*, that is, the sins of our existences by Your essence, *and guard us from the chastisement of the Fire"*, that is, the fire of abandonment and the existence of those who remain,

[3:17] *the patient*, who endure the ordeals of spiritual struggle and discipline, *those who are truthful*, in love and the will [for this struggle], *obedient*, in wayfaring towards it and in it, *expenders*, of all else in the form of their wealth, their acts, their attributes, their souls and essences, *imploring God's pardon*, for the sins of their variegations and their remains at the daybreaks of the days of luminous self-disclosures at the emergence of the rising points of the lights and the manifestation and good tidings of the morning of the Day of the Greater Resurrection in the celestial horizons, whereupon He answers their call at the moment of the rising of the sun of the Essence from the setting of their existence so that there no longer remains any setting, saying:

[3:18] *God bears witness that there is no god except Him*: the abiding Face rises to bear witness by Its essence at the station of the union to Its Oneness, for there will no longer be any witness or thing to be witnessed other than Him. He then returns to the station of differentiation and witnesses by Himself together with others to His Oneness at that locus of witnessing, saying: *and the angels, and those of knowledge, upholding justice*, that is, He establishes justice in the differentiations of His loci of manifestation and their multiple forms, that which constitutes the shadow of Oneness outside the union, by granting every truthful one in accordance with his preparedness and merit what is due to him from His generosity and perfection and [by] His self-disclosure within him in accordance with the capacity of his receptacle; *there is no god except Him*, in both loci of witnessing, *the Mighty*, the Vanquisher who vanquishes everything at the level of union so that none can reach Him, *the Wise*, who through His wisdom governs everything and grants it what is appropriate [for it] at the level of differentiation.

[3:19] *Lo!, the religion with God*, is this affirmation of the Oneness which He Himself has established. His religion is the religion of the submission of countenances, as Abraham, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: *I have surrendered my countenance to God* [Q. 3:20], that is, [I have surrendered] my soul and my totality, and I have divested myself of my egoism and thereby am annihilated in Him. God, exalted be He, commands His beloved, blessings and peace be upon him, to say:

[3:20] *So if they dispute with you, say: 'I have surrendered my countenance to God and whoever follows me'...*

[3:21] *Those who disbelieve in the signs of God*, that is, those who are veiled from [the true] religion, *and slay the prophets without right*, veiled as they are by their [own] religion, refusing all except that to which they are delimited<sup>49</sup> [of beliefs] and which they follow by imitation, while the prophets summon them to the affirmation of Oneness and prohibit them from delimitation, and so they slay them; *and slay those who enjoin to equity*, from among their followers, for equity is the shadow of the affirmation of Oneness — thus he for whom this [affirmation] has not been perfected is not capable of being equitable. For they, by their delimitation to their religion have become veiled and are consequently veiled by their injustice from equity. That is why they oppose them and slay them.

[3:22] *Those are the ones whose works have failed*, those [works] which they performed while following the religion of their prophets and that is because while they were following blindly their prophet they were still saved by virtue of their following [him], since their prophets were their intercessors mediating between them and God in order to procure for them the [divine] effusion; but when they denied the prophets and their just followers they were contravening their particular prophet, since all prophets follow one creed in reality, namely, the belief in the Oneness [of God], without distinguishing between them, being as they are [all] upon the one [single] truth. Thus he who contravenes one [prophet] has in effect contravened all. Likewise, he who contravenes the upholders of justice from among the followers of the prophets is himself unjust and he who is unjust has, by virtue of his injustice, abandoned the following [of prophets]; similarly the denier of the followers is a denier of those who are followed, and the denier of the shadow [of God's Oneness] is a denier of the Essence, abandoning Its light. Once they have contravened their prophet there no longer exists any contact or

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<sup>49</sup> For Ibn 'Arabi, 'delimitation' (*taqyīd*) defines 'reason' or 'intellect', in which such restriction is reflected in its very root meaning ('*aql*, 'fetter', '*aqala*, 'to hobble a camel'). Reason seeks to define and delimit God, which is impossible, whereas it is the heart, by its infinite capacity, free from mental (rational) constraint, is able to understand God; cf. Chittick 1989:107.



correspondence between them and him that enables [the procurement of] effusion from His light and they are thus veiled from His light. Although their works had been illumined by His light by virtue of their following [the prophet], not because of any essential light that these [works] possess, since they are not produced out of certainty, once they are veiled from their prophet the accidental light [of these works] disappears and they become dark and like all other evil deeds from among the attributes of the commanding soul. Here [the following comes to mind], something which I have heard on more than one occasion: the slaying of the disbelievers of the faculties of the commanding soul at the hands of the prophets of the hearts and the justice-commanding spiritual faculties.

[3:26] *Say: 'O God, Possessor of Mastery*, You possess mastery of the world of bodies absolutely, disposing of it [however You wish], there being none who have mastery or disposal or effect in it other than You. *You give mastery to whom You will*, granting him disposal over some of it; *and seize mastery from whom You will*, by assigning that [power of] disposal in the hands of someone other than him, except that there really is no other [than You] there, rather You turn it about from one hand to another, for You are the [only] disposer in all cases in accordance with the different loci of manifestation; *You exalt whom You will*, by casting upon him a light from the lights of Your glory, for *Truly glory belongs altogether to God* [Q. 4:139]; *and You abase whom You will*, by stripping him of the garb of Your glory leaving him abased; *in Your hand is good*, all of it, and You are the absolute Powerful One, giving in accordance with Your will, at times self-disclosing Yourself in a certain locus of manifestation with the attributes of glory and grandeur, garbing that [locus] with the vestment of glory and splendour, and at others with the attributes of vanquisher and abaser, garbing that [locus] with the vestment of ignominy and lowliness; sometimes with the attribute of exalter but You are [in reality] abasing, and sometimes with the attribute of abaser while You are exalting; sometimes with the attribute of independent and You give wealth, sometimes with the attribute of availer but You make [that person] poor, that is, You avail him of wealth, indigent without need of anything.

[3:27] *You make the night to pass into the day and You make the day to pass into the night*: You make the darkness of the soul enter the light of the heart rendering it dark, and You make the light of the heart enter the darkness of the soul so that it is illumined by the mixture of the two despite the lack of correspondence between them. *You bring forth the living*, that is, the one whose heart is alive, *from the dead*, that is, from the one whose soul is dead, [*and You bring forth*] the one with the dead soul from the one with the living heart; indeed, You bring forth the one who is alive with knowledge and gnosis from the one who is dead with ignorance, and You bring forth

the one dead with ignorance from the one alive with knowledge veiling him from the light, as was the case with Bal'am b. Bā'ūrā;<sup>50</sup> *and You provide whom You will*, in the way of both outward and inward graces, or in the way of one of the two, *without reckoning*'.

[3:28] *Let not the believers take the disbelievers as friends, rather than the believers*, for there is no correspondence between the two in reality. Friendship cannot be except in the case of similarity of genus and correspondence; for in that case the love between them [the believers and the disbelievers] could not be essential, rather it would be manufactured and artificial by virtue of its being a superficial show and an act of hypocrisy, which are traits far removed from truth as these are all veils of darkness, since if they [the believers] did not possess a darkness within them that corresponded to the state of disbelief they would not be able to mix or associate with them — *for whoever does that, does not belong to God in anyway*, that is, [he does not] belong to the friendship of God in anyway that he can rely on, since they possess no pure luminosity with which they would merit correspondence to the divine presence — *unless you protect yourselves against them, as a safeguard*, that is, unless you fear something from their part, in which case one must take precautions, in which you case you associate with them outwardly without there being any love for them in your hearts: but even that can only be as a result of the weakness of [your] certainty, for if certainty were to overtake their hearts, they would fear only God, exalted be He, and they would witness the significance of God's words: *And if God afflicts you with some hurt, there is none who can remove it except Him; and if He desires good for you, there is none who can repel His bounty* [Q. 10:107], and they would [in that case] fear none other than Him and hope for [the favour of] none other than Him, which is why He follows [this verse] with the words: *And God warns you of His Self*, that is, He calls you to the eyewitnessed affirmation of Oneness, so that your caution be against none other than His Self; *and to God is the journey's end*, so guard against none other than Him, for He is the One observing your innermost secrets and overt actions, the One Able to requite you if you were to associate with His enemies or to fear them, either secretly or openly.

[3:30] *The day every soul shall find*, [to the end of] the verse: everything that a human being does or says produces an effect in his soul and becomes engraved in his soul. If this happens over and over again, the engraving becomes a deeply-rooted disposition and is thus engraved onto the scrolls of the heavenly souls. But he is distracted from the

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<sup>50</sup> The story of this scholar from among the Israelites is traditionally appended to the exegesis of Q. 7:175 (see the commentary of the *Jalālayn* and that of Ibn Kathīr thereto), as having been given great knowledge by God but misused it and so it turned against him.

configurations of his soul and the things engraved upon it by the distractions of the senses and by the estimative and imaginative perceptions, having no time for them. When his soul departs from his body and there remains nothing to distract it from its configurations and the things engraved upon it, it will find its good or evil deeds presented [to it] before it. If it is evil deeds, it will wish that a great distance separated it from that Day or that deed on account of the chastisement it is undergoing as a result of that [deed]. If these configurations and engravings are deeply-rooted they will constitute that [soul's] form; otherwise it will receive a requital commensurate with that [deed]. This [statement] is repeated: *God warns you of His Self*: reiterating [for emphasis], lest they do something that then warrants His punishment; *and God is Kind to His servants*, which is why He warns them against evil deeds, in the way that a caring parent cautions the child against what would bring about ruin [for that child].

[3:31] *Say: 'If you love God, follow me, and God will love you*: because the Prophet is His beloved and every person who claims love [of God] is required to follow him [the Prophet, for the beloved of a beloved is beloved, which is why love of the Prophet becomes obligatory. To love him [the Prophet] entails following him and wayfaring along his path in words, deeds, character, [spiritual] state, way of life and beliefs. The claim of love can only be in this manner, for he [the Prophet] is the pole of [divine] love and the locus of its manifestation; his path is the talisman of [divine] love. The one who enjoys no share in his [the Prophet's] path has no share of [divine] love. If, on the other hand, he follows him sincerely, his inward aspect, his inmost consciousness, his heart and his soul will correspond to the Prophet's inward aspect, inmost consciousness, heart and soul, and since he [the Prophet] is the locus of manifestation of the [divine] love, by such a correspondence, that follower will necessarily enjoy a portion of God's love commensurate with his share of the following. God then casts His love upon that person and the light of that [divine] love travels from the inner aspect of the Prophet's spirit to him and he becomes a beloved of God and loving of God. If that person should not follow him, then his inward aspect will be in opposition to the inward aspect of the Prophet and he will then be far removed from the qualifications of [divine] love and love will be removed from his heart instantly, since if God does not love that person, he will not be loving of Him; *and forgive you your sins*, just as He forgave his beloved [Prophet] where He said: *So that God may forgive you what is past of your sin and what is to come* [Q. 48:2]. His [the Prophet's] past sin is his essence, while his sin to come is his attributes. Likewise is the case with the sins of the followers, just as God, exalted be He, says: '[My] servant does not cease to approach Me ...' to the end

of the [divine] *ḥadīth*.<sup>51</sup> **God is Forgiving**, erasing the sins of your attributes and essences, **Merciful**, endowing you with existence and attributes deriving from [Him] the Truth that are better [than those sins]. He then descends from this station, since it is more difficult [to secure] than red sulphur, and He calls them to a more general station than the station of love, namely, the station of will, saying:

[3:32] **Say: ‘Obey God, and the Messenger’**, in other words, if you are not loving [of him] and are not able to follow My beloved, then the least that you can do is to be willingly<sup>52</sup> obedient to what you have been commanded, for the willing one must necessarily follow the command and comply with what he has been commanded to. **But if they turn their backs, God loves not the disbelievers**, that is, if they also refuse to do that, then they are disbelieving deniers who are veiled and God does not love the disbeliever. Refraining from obedience necessarily entails disbelief, whereas refraining from following [the prophet] does not necessarily entail that, because the one who refrains from following [the prophet] may still be obedient by following the command. The meaning of ‘obey God and the Messenger’ is ‘obey the Messenger of God’, because of God’s saying: *whoever obeys the Messenger, verily obeys God* [Q. 4:80].

[3:33] **Lo! God has elected Adam and Noah**: ‘election’ is more general than love or friendship and extends to include all prophets since they are God’s elect and elite. Their levels vary in excellence, just as God has said: *Those messengers some We have preferred above others*, and so the most specific of levels is [that of] love, alluded to by His [subsequent] words *and some He raised in rank* [Q. 2:253], which is why the most excellent of them was God’s beloved Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace; next [in rank] comes friendship, which was the attribute of Abraham, peace be upon him, while the most general is election, that is, the attribute of Adam, peace be upon him;

[3:34] **the seed of one another**, in terms of religion and in reality, since generation by birth [read: *wilāda*?] are of two types, formal and spiritual. Every prophet is a successor to another prophet in terms of the affirmation of Oneness, gnosis and what relates to the esoteric principles of religion and is as such that [other] prophet’s son, similar to the [case of] sons of [Sufi] shaykhs in our times. As they say, you have three fathers, a father that has given birth to you, a father that has nurtured you and a father that has given you knowledge. So just as the existence of the body in the formal birth is generated within the womb of the mother from the seminal infusion of the father, so

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<sup>51</sup> The full divine saying (*ḥadīth qudsī*) is quoted by Kāshānī in his commentary to Q. 2:9, above.

<sup>52</sup> The term *murīd* literally means ‘one who wants’ or ‘one who is willing’ (from *irāda*), but in Sufi terminology denotes ‘the seeker’ who ‘wants’ or ‘is willing’ to be on that path to gnosis, to God.

the existence of the heart in the true birth becomes manifest within the womb of the preparedness of the soul [generated] by the [spiritual] infusion of the shaykh or teacher; it is to this [latter] birth that Jesus, peace be upon him, alluded in his saying: ‘He who has not been born again shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’ [cf. John 3:3]. Know then that spiritual birth mostly ensues from the formal one by procreation, which is why outwardly prophets were also the progeny and the fruit of a single tree: ‘Imrān son of Yaṣhur, father of Moses and Aaron, was a descendant of Levi son of Jacob son of Isaac son of Abraham; and ‘Imrān son of Māthān, father of Mary mother of Jesus, was a descendant of Judah son of Jacob. It is also well known that Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him, was a descendant of Ishmael son of Abraham, and that Abraham was [a descendant] of Noah, peace be upon him. The reason for [all of that] is that in terms of purity and impurity the spirit corresponds to the constitution in terms of equitability or lack of it at the moment of engenderment. For every spirit there is a corresponding constitution that is specific to it, since the [divine] effusion arrives in proportion to the correspondence and the varying quality of spirits from pre-eternity according to their kinds and levels in terms of proximity or distance [from the divine]. Hence constitutions vary accordingly in sempiternity so that they are connected to these [spirits]. Bodies that are generated from one another are similar in constitution, for the most part, though God knows, except when there are accidental matters that intervene that accord [with God’s will]. Likewise then the spirits that are attached to these [constitutions] are close in terms of rank [to one another], corresponding in attribute, all of which reinforces [the fact] that the Messiah (*mabdi*), peace be upon him, shall be from the progeny of Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace. *God is Hearer*, when the wife of ‘Imrān said ‘*Lord, I have vowed ...*’ [Q. 3:35], *Knower*, of her intention as she bore witness with her words:

[3:35] *Lo! It is You Who are the Hearer, the Knower.* Know that the intentions and configurations of the soul have an effect on the soul of the child, just as foods have an effect on its body. Thus the one whose food is licit and wholesome and the configurations of whose soul are luminous, and whose intentions are sincere and directed towards the Truth, his child will be a believer, a truthful one, a saint or a prophet. The one whose food is forbidden and the configurations of whose soul are dark and vile, whose intentions are corrupt and despicable, his child will be corrupt or a vile disbeliever, since the semen from which the child issues is generated by that food, nurtured in that soul and thus corresponds to it. That is why the Messenger of God said, ‘A child is the innermost secret of its father, and so the truthfulness of Mary and the prophethood of Jesus were the blessing of the truthfulness of her father.

[Q. 3:37] [*Whenever Zachariah went into the sanctuary, where she was,*] *he found her with provisions:* it is possible that what is meant by this is spiritual provision in the way of gnoses, [spiritual] realities, knowledge and wisdoms that were being effused upon her from that which is with God. Since to be designated specifically by [divine] witness (*‘indiyya*) is proof that these [provisions] were provisions directly from God (*laduniyya*).

[3:38] *Then Zachariah prayed to his Lord:* Zachariah was an extremely old man and a leader and guardian of the people. He requested from his Lord a true child who would take his place in nurturing and guiding people, as alluded to in *sūra Kāf-hā’-yā’-‘ayn-ṣād*.<sup>53</sup> He then bestows upon him the gift of John (*Yahyā*) from his own loins through his own ability after he had been commanded to cleave in spiritual retreat for three days. At this point you might seek the interpretation [of this] by seeking a correspondence [with this story] to your own states and the details of your existence as you have come to know. That is to say, the corporeal nature, that is, the corporeal faculty is [represented by] the wife of ‘Imrān the spirit, who vowed as an offering what was in her faculty of the reassured soul to God, exalted be He, by complying with the command of the Truth and by her obedience to it and so she gave birth to the female of the soul. God thereupon placed the Zachariah of reflection in charge of her after He accepted her [offering] on account of her being pure and holy. Whenever the Zachariah of reflection entered into the sanctuary of the brain, where she was, he found her with provisions of intuitive meanings which had been unveiled to her [simply] as a result of her purity without any distinction of reflective capacity on her part. Then the Zachariah of reflection called upon the compositions of those meanings and sought from God as a bestowal a wholesome child sanctified from the pollutants of nature. God heard his call, that is, He responded. Thereupon the angels of the spiritual faculties called to him as he stood fulfilling His command putting together the components of knowledge, communing with his Lord, seeking that the lights descend upon him and approaching Him by orienting himself towards the world of holiness in the sanctuary of the brain;

[3:39] *that ‘God gives you good tidings of John,* of the intellect in act, *confirming,* Jesus of the heart, believing in him, as he is Word from God, sanctified as he is above the world of bodies and material generation, *a lord,* to all kinds of faculties, *and one chaste,* preventing his soul from engaging [his] corporeal nature or clothing himself in the natures of the corporeal faculties, *and a prophet,* informing [as he will] of forms of gnosis and universal truths and teaching virtuous character traits and correct manners of governance by the command of the Truth; *of the righteous’,* of the dispersions and disengagement that by virtue of their acts merit being among those brought near to the

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<sup>53</sup> These are the enigmatic letters with which *sūrat Maryam* (Q. 19) begins.

divine presence after the reflection [sc. Zachariah] had attained the old age of the limit of its [creational] stage but had not reached the ability to perceive the holy truths and the universal gnosés; while his wife, who constituted the nature of the ego-centric spirit being the locus for the disposal of reflection, barren by [pure] disengaged light. The indication of that, namely, the indication of the actualisation of the disengaged light and its becoming manifested by the pure soul is the abstention [by Zachariah] from communing with the corporeal faculties as these seek to actualise their demands and desires as well as [abstaining from] mixing with them with regard to the surpluses of their pleasures and lusts for three days, each day constituting a full decade of the [various] stages of his life, ten years [in all], except for gesturing to them by some subtle token, commanding them to [perform] the glorification specific to each one of them — without drawing near to any of them with regard to their goals — and occupying himself for three days, the duration of which is thirty years starting from the age of discernment which is [after] the first ten [years], with the remembrance of his Lord in the sanctuary of the brain and [with] the glorification specific to that always. Likewise the angels of the spiritual faculties said to Mary of the pure wholesome soul:

[3:42] *God has elected you*, because of your being above lust, *and made you pure*, from the vices of reprehensible character traits and attributes, *and He has chosen you above the women*, of the concupiscent souls variegated by despicable acts and vile natures.

[3:43] *O Mary*: be obedient to your Lord by [the fulfilment of] the duties of acts of obedience and worship, *and prostrate*, at the station of brokenness, humility, poverty, incapacity and pardon-seeking, *and bow*, at the station of submissiveness and heartfelt humility with those who submit.

[3:44] *That is of the tidings of the Unseen*, that is, the states of the unseen aspects of your existence. *We reveal it to you*, O prophet of the spirit, *for you were not with them*, [you were not] with the spiritual and ego-centric faculties, that is, at their rank or station, *when they were casting their quills, which of them should have charge of Mary*: that is, [when] they were vying against one another with their arrows and hurrying with their shares, which of them should govern Mary the soul and take charge of it in accordance with his opinion and what his nature entails, to preside over it and command it to what he sees as beneficial to his affair; *nor were you with them*, at the station of the breasts, which is the locus for the conflict between the spiritual faculties and the ego-centric ones, the locus of the their conflict being the breast, *when they were disputing*, in conflict back and forth seeking to be in charge when this [possibility] became manifest, before [engaging in] spiritual discipline, when the angels of the spiritual faculties were victorious with the success granted by the Truth after spiritual discipline and said to Mary the soul:

[3:45] *'God gives you good tidings of a Word*, the heart, bestowed, *from Him, whose name is the Anointed one*, because he shall anoint you with light, *honoured shall he be in this world*, because of his perception of particulars and his determining of the means of livelihood in the best, purest and most correct way, such that the human beings of the outer faculties and the jinn of the inner faculties obey, revere and exalt him, *and*, in, *the Hereafter*, because of his perception of universal meanings and holy gnosés and his management of the final return and his guiding to the Truth such that We shall grant him the kingdom of the heaven of the spirit and honour him, being among those brought near to the presence of the Truth, accepting of His self-disclosures and unveilings.

[3:46] *He shall speak to mankind in the cradle*, of the body, *and in his manhood*, as one having attained the stage of the shaykh of the spirit overtaken by the brightness of his light, *and he is of those who are good*, for the station of gnosis'.

[3:47] *She said, 'Lord, how shall I have a child when no mortal has touched me?'*: the soul marvels at its bearing child and giving birth without having been touched by a mortal, that is, without having been nurtured by a shaykh or taught by a mortal teacher, this being the significance of her virginity. *He said, 'It is such. God creates what He will*, that is, He elects whom He will through divine attraction and unveiling, endowing that person with the station of the heart without nurture or pedagogy, as is the state with [God's] beloved and some of the loving ones.

[3:48] *And He will teach him*, by Lordly pedagogy the Book of intellectual knowledge and the wisdoms of the divine laws and the gnosés of the divine scriptures such as the Torah and the Gospels, in other words, the exoteric and the esoteric gnosés.

[3:49] *To be a messenger*, to the spiritual ones who are prepared from among the children of Jacob the spirit: *'I have come to you with a sign from your Lord*, that proves that I have come from His part; *I will create for you*, through [my] nurture and acts of purification and practical wisdom, out of the clay of the souls of the deficiently prepared ones, *like the shape of a bird*, the one that flies off to the Holy Side by the intensity of its yearning; *then I will breathe into it*, of the breath of divine knowledge and an infusion of the true life by the effects of [divine] company and nurture, *and it will be a bird*, that is, a living soul, flying away with the wings of yearning and aspiration towards the Side of the Truth. *I will also heal the blind*, the one veiled from the light of the Truth whose insight has never opened up [to the truth] and the sun of whose face has never seen the Truth or His light and has never known His folk adorned as they are by the light of guidance; *and [heal] the leper*, whose soul is disfigured by the sickness of vices and corrupt beliefs and the love of this world and the pollutants of lusts, with the medicine of the souls; *and I bring to life*, the dead of ignorance by means of the life of



knowledge, *by the leave of God. And I will inform you too of what things you eat*, [of what things] you partake in your pursuit of lusts and pleasures, *and what you treasure up in your houses*, that is, in the houses of your unseens in the way of motives and intentions. *Surely in that is a sign for you, if you are believers.*

[3:50] *Likewise, confirming that which was before me of the Torah*, that is, of the Torah of exoteric knowledge, *and to make lawful for you some of that which was forbidden to you*, of the inner lights; *I have come to you with a sign*, a proof, *from your Lord*, namely, the proclamation of Oneness concerning which no prophet has ever disagreed with me. *So fear God*, if you oppose me, for I am upon the truth, *and obey me*, when I call you to the proclamation of Oneness.

[3:52] *And when Jesus*, the heart, *sensed*, on the part of the ego-centric faculties, *disbelief*, veiling, denial and opposition, *he said*, ‘*Who will be my helpers unto God?*’, that is, he demanded from the spiritual faculty what he required to assist him against them in his orientation towards God. *The disciples said*, that is, the purest and best aspects of the mentioned spiritual elements [said]: ‘*We will be helpers of God; we believe in God*, through proofs and by being illumined with the light of the spirit; *witness that we have submitted*, [that] we are obedient and compliant.

[3:53] *Lord, we believe in what You have revealed*, of the knowledge of Oneness and the effusion of [Your] light, *and we follow the Messenger; inscribe us therefore with those who bear witness*’, those who are present before You, observing Your command, or of those who bear witness to Your Oneness.

[3:54] *And they schemed*, that is, the estimations and imaginations [schemed] to seize the heart and destroy it through all sorts of tempting insinuations, *and God schemed*, by making rational arguments and definitive proofs prevail over their imaginations and doubts, raising Jesus the heart to the heaven of the spirit and casting his likeness upon the soul so that their attempt to slay [it] collapses; *and God is the best of schemers*, for His scheming prevailed; and He said to Jesus:

[3:55] ‘*I shall gather you*, that is, I shall seize you unto Me from among them, *and raise you to Me*, that is, to the heaven of the spirit alongside Me, *and I shall cleanse you of*, the impurity of being alongside, *those who disbelieved*, from among the vile faculties and their scheming and [from] the vileness of their company; *and I shall set those who follow you*, of the spiritual ones, *above those who disbelieved*, of the ego-centric ones until the Day of the Greater Resurrection and the arrival at the station of the Unity. *Then*, on that Day, *to Me shall be your return, and I will decide between you*, in truth, *as to what you were at variance about*, before unity, in terms of the contention and conflict that resulted from [those] faculties. I shall then establish each one in its rightful abode there

and shall grant it what is appropriate for it from that which is with Me, whereafter disagreement and conflict shall be removed.

[3:56] *As for the disbelievers, I will chastise them with a terrible chastisement*, by depriving them of the station of the heart and veiling them in the guises of their deeds.

[3:57] *But as for the believers*, from among the spiritual ones, *who do deeds of righteousness*, of all sorts of acts of [spiritual] augmentation, adornment and purification in order to assist the heart against the soul and remaining closely behind it as it orients itself towards the Truth; *He will pay them in full their wages*, by way of the holy lights and spiritual illuminations that radiate upon them; *God loves not the evildoers*, who stint what is due by right of wages. As for the interpretation [of this verse] without [effecting] correspondences, it is that they schemed to send someone to slay Jesus, peace be upon him. But a corporeal form was presented to them as a likeness, which was the manifestation of Jesus, the spirit of God, peace be upon him, in the real form of Jesus such that they supposed it to be Jesus and so slew it and crucified it, when God had raised Jesus, peace be upon him, to the fourth heaven as his spirit, peace be upon him, was an effusion of the spiritual aspect of the sun. But in their ignorance they did not know that the spirit of God could not be slain. When he was certain of his state before being raised, he [Jesus] said to his companions: 'I am departing to my father, your heavenly father', that is, I am seeking purification from the world of impurity and connecting to the holy spirit, bestower of forms, effuser of spirits and perfections, nurturer of men by means of infusing [their] spirit with the breath. I shall reinforce you with that effusion. At that time his call was not heeded and his example was not followed and so he commanded the disciples to disperse after him across the land and to call [people] to the Truth. They said, 'How are we to do this if you shall not be amongst us and now when you are our call is not heeded'. He said [to them]: 'The sign of my reinforcement of you is that people will accept your call after me'. After he was raised, his companions would not leave anyone until he heeded their call. Acceptance of their call appeared amongst people, their word prevailed, and their religion spread in all corners of the world. But since he [Jesus] did not reach the seventh heaven to which Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, ascended, the one referred to as the Lote-tree of the Ultimate Boundary [Q. 53:14], by which I mean, [that Jesus did not reach] the ultimate station of perfection and did not attain the degree of [divine] love [which Muḥammad attained], it was inevitable that he would have to come down again in a corporeal form to follow the Muḥammadan religious community by which he would attain that degree [of divine love], and God knows best the realities of things.

[3:59] *Truly, the likeness of Jesus*, in other words, his attribute in God's sight, his being created by [divine] power without a father, *is as Adam's likeness*, in having been created

without parents. Know that the marvels of [divine] power are endless and there can be no analogy in this respect to the effect that there is an analogue from the world of wisdom for the creation of a human being without parents, since there are many deficient animal beings of unusual nature that are generated from the point of creation in a short period of time then reproduce and propagate [further]. Likewise, a human being can come into being by being generated in one of several cycles, then through propagation. Similarly is engenderment without a father, for the seminal fluid of a man is much hotter than that of a woman and contains a more powerful capacity for coagulation, just as in the case of rennets with regard to [the curdling of] cheese, whereas in the woman the more powerful capacity is that of being coagulated, as is the case with milk. When the two come together coagulation takes place, the fluids coagulate and the embryo is engendered. It is possible to have a strong female constitution that corresponds to a male constitution as can be seen in the case of many women, to the extent that what is generated in her right kidney [read: ovary?] is equivalent to male seminal fluid on account of its extreme heat sitting as it does next to the liver in the case of the woman the constitution of whose liver is sound and sufficiently hot, and that what is generated in her left kidney is equivalent to female seminal fluid. So when she experiences seminal emissions as a result of a male form overwhelming her imagination during sleep and consciousness because of her spirit's being joined to the holy spirit and to another angel and [by] the imagination's reproductive imitation (*muḥākāt*) of that [male form], as God, exalted be He says: *and he became imaginalised to her as a man without fault* [Q. 19:17], the two seminal fluids from both sides proceed to the womb. In the setting place on the right side is formed the stronger capacity for causing coagulation and in the setting place on the left side is formed the capacity for becoming coagulated whereupon the embryo is engendered and the spirit is attached to it. As for His saying: *'Be', and he was*, this is an allusion to the infusion of the spirit, which derives from the world of the command and as such is not preceded by any substrata or [time] duration, as in the case of the creation of human bodies. Adam thus corresponds to Jesus as mentioned in that both share in the breaking of the [creational] habit and in that both of their bodies were created from the dust of the elements, both preceded by substrata and a duration, and that their spirit is originated [without precedent] from the world of the command which [spirit] is not preceded by substrata or duration.

[3:61] *And whoever disputes with you concerning him*, that is, concerning Jesus. [As for the interpretation of the rest of] the verse: mutual imprecation (*mubābala*) against prophets has a tremendous consequence the cause of which is the connection of their souls to the holy spirit and God's reinforcing theirs with this [latter] which is the cause

of effects in the world of elements and so the world of elements is acted upon by it in the way that our body is acted upon by our spirit by means of the configurations that occur to it such as wrath, grief, reflection upon the states of the beloved one and so on in the way of the movement of limbs when will and resolve arise and human souls act upon them just as our senses and all our other faculties are acted upon by the configurations of our spirits. Thus if a holy soul is joined to it or to certain spirits of the celestial bodies and souls of the angelic realm, its effect on the world upon the joined orientation is the effect of that to which it is joined and so the elemental bodies and deficient human souls are acted upon by it in the way that it wants. Have you not seen how the souls of the Christians were acted upon by his [Muḥammad's] soul, peace be upon him, with fear and thus refrained from the mutual imprecation [against the Prophet] and sued for peace by accepting to pay the poll-tax (*jizya*).

[3:62] *There is no god but God*, that is, Jesus has nothing to do with divinity and ought not to be worshipped just by virtue of the disengagement of his essence, for the world of the angelic realm and that of the realm of the divine attributes are all similarly [disengaged].

[3:64] [*Come now to a word*] *agreed upon between us and you*: that is to say, no prophet or scripture has ever been at variance over the word proclaiming God's Oneness.

[3:79] *It belongs not to any mortal that God should give him*, [to the end of] the verse: prophesying (*istinbāʿ*) can only come after the level of sanctity (*walāya*) and annihilation through Unity. It is not for a mortal whose mortality God has effaced by annihilating him from his soul and whom He has rewarded with a luminous existence from the Truth, [an existence] that accepts the Book and the divine wisdom, [it is not for such] to then call creatures unto himself, since the one who calls unto himself is [by definition] veiled by his own soul, just as Pharaoh and his likes: those who knew the Oneness [of God] but did not encounter it as a state or by the tasting and who did not arrive at the eyewitnessing, those whose souls subsist without having tasted the flavour of annihilation and were veiled by these [souls of theirs] and called creatures unto themselves. They are the ones regarding whom the Messenger of God said, 'The most evil of people is the one is still alive when the Resurrection takes place'. *Rather*, he would say, *'Be lordly*, related to the Lord because of the Lordship overtaking them and the obliteration of [their] mortality on account of their being knowers who act and teach and recite God's scriptures. In other words, be worshippers content with knowledge and deeds and the regular performance of acts of obedience so that you might become lordly by the prevailing of light over darkness.

[3:80] *He would never order you*, to a particular devotion and to confine yourselves to a [particular] form for that is a veil and disbelief, nor would the Prophet order you to veil yourselves after you have submitted that your existences belongs to God.

[3:81] *And when God made a covenant with the prophets*, to the end [of the verse]: there is between prophets a pre-eternal mutual familiarity due to the fact that they are the people of the first row, knowers of God. Every [spiritual] knower knows the station of all other knowers. Their pledge from God on the basis of the covenant of His Oneness is includes all the children of Adam, as mentioned, whereas the pledge for the prophets is specific to them and to those who know them through sincere adherence [to them]. God has then made two covenants with the prophets, one of which is the one mentioned in His statement *And when your Lord took from the Children of Adam ...* to the end of that verse [Q. 7:172]. The other is the one mentioned in His statement *And when We took a pledge from the prophets, and from you, and from Noah and Abraham and Moses and Jesus son of Mary. And We took from them a solemn pledge* [Q. 33:7], namely, the covenant of mutual familiarity between them, the establishing of religion and not to be divided with regard to it, each one of them confirming the other, and to call [people] truthfully to the proclamation of God's Oneness and to specify that worship be to God alone and to obedience of the Prophet and that they should make each other known to their respective communities. The specificity of that [pledge for the prophets] is because to know God, exalted be He, in the form of differentiations, the veiling of attributes and the multiplicity of loci of manifestations is more intricate and more subtle than to know Him at the source of union. Those who have been provided [the capacity] to follow [prophets] sincerely know this and [know] specifically to the exclusion of others the regulations of the self-disclosures of the attributes which are the [divine] laws.

[3:82] *Then whoever turns his back after that*, that is, after having known God's covenant with the prophets and the prophets' communication to him of what God has pledged to them, *those they are*, the ones who have departed from God's religion, and there is no other religion in reality on which to rely except that it be illusion.

[3:83] *What! Do they desire other than God's religion*, when all who are in the heavens and the earth abide by His religion, *willingly*, such as [all those] other than human beings and Satan, *or unwillingly*, such as human beings and Satan, since disbelief cannot embrace any other existent. All [these other existents] comply with what God has commanded them obediently. Man, on the other hand, veils himself of his own free will and because he has forgotten God's covenant and has accepted the call of Satan, corresponding to him by virtue of his [man's] ego-centric darkness: he does not believe, nor does he comply except unwillingly, God knows, except the one whom God has

protected [from such sin] and chosen [for such protection]. Satan, on account of his veiling himself with his conceit and ego, when he said *I am better than him* [Q. 7:12], and because of his refusal and arrogance, disbelieved even as he knew that he was being disobedient, realising that his disbelief took place by God's will: that is the essence of faith, as God says: *like Satan when he says to man, 'Disbelieve!'... he [then] says to him, 'Lo! I am absolved of you. Indeed I fear God, the Lord of the Worlds* [Q. 59:16]. He also says: *And that Satan adorned their deeds for them and said, 'Today no person shall overcome you, for I shall be your protector'. But when the two armies sighted each other, he turned his back in flight saying, 'I am quit of you, for I see what you do not see. I fear God and God is severe in retribution'* [Q. 8:48]; and in another place: *And Satan says, when the issue has been decided, 'Truly God promised you a promise of truth, whereas I promised you, then failed you, for over you I had no warrant, except that I called you and you responded to me. So do not blame me, but blame yourselves. I cannot heed your [distress] call, nor can you heed mine. Lo! I disbelieved in your making me an associate of God before* [Q. 14:22]. All of these verses are proof that he [Satan] has faith, but when it shall not profit him; **and to Him they shall be returned**, in the final sequel, when there shall be no religion other than God's religion. Nay, all upon this return shall be upon His religion: 'All are followers of the religion of the Truth if they [only] could discern, for a religion that is not for [sake of] the Truth, is not one that is lawful'.

[3:85] **Whoever desires a religion other than Islam:** what is meant by *islām* here is affirmation of Oneness which is God's religion according to His statement *I have surrendered my countenance to God* [Q. 3:20] and is the one mentioned in the preceding verse and what He has described as subsuming all religions and what requires complete voluntary obedience, as mentioned at the end part of that verse where He says: *and to Him we submit* [Q. 3:84]; **it shall not be accepted from him**, since his religion shall not arrive at the Truth, exalted be He, because of the [intervening] place of the veil; **and in the Hereafter he shall be among the losers**, those who have lost by purchasing their souls and what they have been veiled with in exchange for the truth.

[3:86] **How shall God guide a people**, to the end of the verse: He denies His guidance to a people whom He had guided initially by the light of preparedness to faith, then by the light of faith until they witnessed with their own eyes the truth of the Messenger and acquired certainty to the extent that they no longer had a single doubt; and this [certainty] was supplemented by [their] acquisition of rational proofs from clear signs. But then after all of these testimonies their souls manifested themselves in obstinacy and obduracy. The lights of their witnessing hearts, intellects and spirits, all three of them, were veiled by the Truth for the sake of the Truth, on account of the misfortune

of this [act of] injustice of theirs and the mastery which their [evil-] commanding souls acquired over them, that which constitutes the utmost in evil deed. Thus God says: *God guides not the evildoing folk*, because of the harshness of their veil and the great extent to which they are distant from the Truth and from the reception of the light. And these [evildoing folk] are of two classes. For one class the configuration of the mastery of the commanding soul over their hearts has taken deep root and become fixed in them. They have engrossed themselves excessively in error and the pursuit of evil and have reached extreme distance [from the Truth] and obstinacy until such [behaviour] became an inherent trait that does not abandon them. In the case of the other class, that configuration has not taken deep root in them yet and their hearts have not become rusted over; [for these] there remains behind the veil of the soul a ray of the light of their preparedness that perhaps a mercy and a gift of success from God should reach them that they might then become remorseful and feel shame by virtue of the innate disposition of the intellect. He thus alludes to the first class in His statement *surely those who disbelieve after they have believed* to the end of that verse [Q. 3:90], and to the second [class] with His statement:

[3:89] *But those who repent thereafter, and make amends*, for what they had rendered corrupt, by pursuing devotedly [good] deeds and acts of spiritual discipline.

[3:91] [*Surely those who disbelieve, and die disbelieving,*] *the whole earth full of gold shall not be accepted from any one of them*, because at that instant only subsisting luminous matters are accepted, as the Hereafter is the world of light and subsistence wherein perishing matters of darkness shall have no effect or bearing. Besides, was the cause of their disbelief and their being veiled anything but their love of these wicked and transient things? So how then could these constitute the cause of their salvation, nearness, acceptance and remorse when they are the very cause of their destruction, distance, loss and privation?

[3:92] *You will not attain piety*: any act that brings a person closer to God is piety (*birr*). The only way to become closer to Him is to absolve oneself (*tabarrī*) of all that is other than Him. Thus when one loves something he becomes veiled thereby from God, exalted be He, and is guilty of a subtle associationism (*shirk*) because his love is attached to something other than God, as God says *Yet there be people who take to themselves compeers besides God, loving them as God is loved* [Q. 2:165], preferring that their souls love these over God. Such a person has become distant from God on three accounts: the love of other than the Truth; association of others [with God]; and preferring one's soul over the Truth. But is such a person were to prefer God over his soul and voluntarily give away that [love of others to God], expending it [for God], then that distance would disappear and nearness would ensue. Otherwise, he will remain veiled,

even if he were to expend many times over of something else, and will not attain piety because God knows what is being expended and [knows of] his being veiled by something other than Him.

[3:93] *All food was lawful to the Children of Israel*, that is, [to] those possessing intellect, by virtue of [its] being the foundation, since the intellect judges that things were created for the benefit of servants absolutely and hence what pertains to the category of things eaten was created to be consumed; *save what Israel*, the spirit, *forbade for himself*, through rational consideration by trial and comparison, ascertaining what is harmful and what is beneficial at the level of differentiation after the undifferentiating stipulation that it is all lawful was made. For the intellect judges that what is harmful or what brings about ruin should be forbidden; *before the Torah was revealed*, that is, before the divine [prescriptions of the] law was revealed in the Torah and all of the other divine scriptures. People fell into disagreement after they had been one community following the religion of the Truth, as has been mentioned. God then sent prophets to guide them and to put right the states determining [both] their livelihoods [in this world] and their final return [in the next], and to make them return the [path of] truth and agreement. What divine wisdom required that it be forbidden was indeed forbidden, in accordance with their imbalanced states and the foolish natures of their hearts and their diseased souls, in the way of things to which they were accustomed and things which turned [them] away from the Truth and constituted veils between them and God, and which incited caprices and passions and all manner of corruptive acts and temptations that prevented them from [realising] their perfections and [achieving] guidance.

[3:96] *The first house established for the people*: they say that it was the first house to appear on the surface of the water at the time of the creation of the heaven and the earth. He created it 2000 years before the earth; it had been a clear froth on the surface of the water under which the earth was then spread out. The House then is an allusion to the real heart; its appearance on the surface of the water constitutes its attachment to the drop of [creational] fluid at the heaven of the animal spirit and the earth of the body; its creation before the earth is an allusion to its eternity and the temporal incidence of the body; the specification of 2000 years is an allusion to its precedence over the body in two modes, the mode of the soul and the mode of the heart, a precedence of level, since 1000 constitutes one complete level, as has been alluded to before; its being a clear froth is an allusion to the purity of its substance; the spreading out of the earth below it is an allusion to the engenderment of the body by effect and the fact that its [the body's] figures, delineations, and the forms of its limbs follow on from its configurations. That is the interpretation of the narrative. Know also that the



locus for the attachment of the spirit to the body and the joining point of the real heart to it is at first the formal heart, which is the first of the organs to undergo engenderment and the first to function and the last to become still, hence its being the first house established for people: *was that at Bakka*, the breast as a form, or the first locus of worship and place of prayer established for people, [that is] for the real heart that is located in the Bakka of the spiritual breast. That [spiritual] breast is the most noble station of the soul and the place in which swarm the faculties that are oriented towards it; *a blessed place*, possessing divine blessedness emanating from the effusion that it connects to all existence, faculties and life. For all of the faculties that are contained in the organs proceed to these [organs] first by way of that [place]; *and a guidance to all worlds*: a cause of guidance and a light by which one is guided to God. [3:97] *Therein are clear signs*, in the way of forms of knowledge, gnoses, wisdoms and realities, *the station of Abraham*, that is to say, the intellect which is the foothold of Abraham the spirit, meaning the locus wherein the light of that [house] is joined to the heart; *and whoever enters it*, of the wayfarers and the perplexed who wander in the deserts of ignorance, *shall be secure*, from the misguiding enticements of scheming demons and [from] the afreets of the insinuations of the soul and the snatches of the satans of estimation and the jinn of imaginations and the slaughter by the beasts of prey of the egocentric faculties and their attributes. *It is the duty of people towards God to make the pilgrimage to the House*, [to] this [House], and to circumambulate it, *if he is able to make his way there*, of the wayfarers who are prepared and who are sincere in their will, and have the means of the provision of piety and the mount of powerful resolve, to the exclusion of others who are of a weak preparedness and who stay behind because of weakness and [spiritual] sickness and [because of] all barriers pertaining to character traits or those egocentric or corporeal [barriers] that are accidental. *As for the one who disbelieves*, that is, the one who has veiled his preparedness despite its having the capacity [for spiritual growth] and who turns away from it out of the caprices of the soul, *God is Independent of*, him, and of, *the worlds*, all of them. In other words, He is not concerned with him because of the latter's distance [from God] and his being unreceptive to His mercy [existing as he does] under the ignominy of the veil, which is that privation [from God] entails being forsaken and rejected.

[3:101] *Whoever holds fast to God*, by severing himself from all that is other than Him and [by] holding on to true affirmation of Oneness, *he is guided to a straight path*. For the straight path is the way of the Truth, exalted be He, as He has said: *Surely my Lord is on a straight path* [Q. 11:56]. Thus whoever severs himself in devotion solely to Him through annihilation in the Unity, his path becomes the path of God.

[3:102] *[O you who believe] fear God as He should be feared*, for what concerns the remainder of your existences, for the true way to fear Him is to fear Him as He ought and deserves to be feared, which is to be annihilated in Him. In other words, make [fear of] Him a means of protection so that you guard against the remainders of your essences and your attributes. For in God there is compensation for all that has gone before; *and do not die*, except in a state in which [your] countenances have submitted to Him. In other words, let your death be annihilation in the Oneness.

[3:103] *And hold fast to God's bond, together*, that is, [hold fast] to His covenant, the one [mentioned] in His statement: *Am I not your Lord* [Q. 7:172], united in affirmation of [Hi] Oneness; *and do not separate from one another*, with disagreeing opinions, for to be separated from the truth results from the divergence of natures and the pursuit of caprice as well as the mutual attraction of faculties. The affirmer of [His] Oneness is far removed from such [a predicament], because his heart has been illumined by the light of the Truth and his soul has been irradiated by the effusion of the heart, such that his faculties are at peace and in friendship with one another. *And remember God's grace upon you*, by way of [His] guiding you to the affirmation of Oneness that entails love in the hearts, *when you were enemies*, because of your being veiled with egocentric veils and the coverings of nature, far removed from the light, and [by] the universal goals that allow for association and which remain, by consensus, in the abyss of darkness; *and He brought your hearts together*, by making you love one another for God's sake so that these [hearts] might be illumined by His light; *so that by His grace you became brothers*, in religion, friends through God; *and you were upon the brink of a pit of fire*, which is the abyss into which fall wicked nature and the locus of privation and chastisement; *but He delivered you from it*, as a result of your true closeness with one another in pursuit of the Lote-tree of the station of the spirit and the spirit of the Paradise of the Essence. *So God makes clear to you His signs*, by means of the self-disclosures of [His] subtle attributes and [by His] luminous irradiations, *that you might be guided*, to His beauty and the self-disclosure of His Essence.

[3:104] *Let there be one community of you calling to good*, that is, let there be from among you all a company of men who are knowledgeable and who pursue [good] deeds, who are knowers, upright in religion, such as the [Sufi] shaykhs of a *ṭarīqa*; *calling to good*, for the one who does not know God does not know good. Absolute good is absolute perfection, that which can enable a human being, depending on the type, to know the Truth, exalted be He, and to reach Him. Supererogatory [good] is the type by which one can attain the absolute [good] or [attain] that perfection specific to each person depending on what his specific preparedness entails. Therefore, the good to which the call is being made is either the Truth, exalted be He, or the means to reach

[Him]. ‘Decency’ (*ma’rūf*) is every obligatory or recommended deed in religion, by which one seeks nearness to God, exalted be He; and ‘indecent’ (*munkar*) is every prohibited or reprehensible act that distances a person from God, exalted be He, and renders the person disobedient or one who has fallen short of his duties and is blameworthy. For the one who does not affirm the Oneness and is not upright, neither the station of the call nor the station of enjoining decency and forbidding indecency have any bearing on him; the one who is not an affirmer of Oneness might call [others] to obey other than God and to one who is not upright in religion. But even if such a person were an affirmer of the Oneness, it may be that he enjoins what for him is decent but what at the same time is indecent; or that he forbids what for him is indecent but what in reality is decent. Like the one who has attained the station of union but has veiled himself with the Truth from creatures, so that he frequently deems licit what is illicit, such as certain intoxicants, or he disposes of [other] people’s property and deems illicit what is licit, nay what is recommended, such as being of humble character, rewarding virtuous acts and so on; *those are the successful*, the ones singled out for prosperity, those for whom there remains no veil, being the viceregents of God in His earth.

[3:105] *Do not be*, configured [merely] in accordance with your natures, not following any imam, nor being in agreement, of one voice as [when] you follow a [spiritual] leader who unites you upon the same path (*ṭarīqa*); *like those who became divided*, pursuing capricious opinions and innovations, *and disputed after there came to them*, the definitive proofs of reason and the [divine] law, [proofs] which require a uniting of orientations and an agreement in voice. People have differing natures and innate dispositions, divided opinions, dissimilar habits and conducts, deriving from their constitutions and their caprices. From these there result divergent comprehensions and hostile character traits. When they do not have an exemplar or an imam under whose guardianship their convictions, conduct and opinions can be unified, and through whose love and obedience their voices, habits and desires are brought into harmony with one another, they become neglected, divided, prey for Satan, much like a stray sheep is [an easy target] for a wolf. That is why the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, said: ‘People must have an imam, whether he be pious or impious. The Prophet never sent two or more men on some mission except that he commanded that one be [imam] over the other and commanded the other to obey the former and to follow him [in all decisions], so that their affairs are unified and organised. Otherwise, confusion and chaos would ensue. The affairs of religion and of this world would be in disarray and the means to livelihood and to the [life at the] final return would be disrupted’. The Messenger of God said, “Whoever separates himself from the community (*jamā’a*),

even by an inch, shall never the heart of Paradise”. He also said, “God is with those who stay together. Do you not see that if human society is not regulated by the leadership of the heart and the obedience of the intellect, how its organisation is disrupted and begins to fall into corruption and schism, both which entail the loss of this world and the Hereafter”. When God’s [following] words were sent down, *And that this is My straight path, so follow it; and do not follow other ways, lest it separate you away from His way* [Q. 6:153], the Messenger of God drew a line and said, “this is the path of right-guidance”, then drew lines to the right and to the left of it and said, “these are [other] paths, and upon each path sits a devil calling [man] to that [path]”.

[3:106] *The day when some faces are blackened, and some faces whitened*: the whitening of the face is a reflection of the illumination of the countenance of the heart by the light of the Truth by virtue of its [the heart’s] orientation toward it and its turning away from the lower egocentric darkened aspect. That can only come about as a result of affirming the Oneness [of God] and remaining upright upon it by the illumination of the soul, in addition, with the light of the heart, so that the totality becomes illumined by the light of God. [As for] its blackening, that is [the result of] the darkness of the countenance of the heart when it pursues the soul that seeks its shares [of this world] and turns away from the luminous aspect of the truth, the consequence of its [the heart’s] befriending of the soul and the following after desires in order to actualise pleasures, all of which ensues from following the divided satanic paths. *As for those whose faces are blackened*, it is said to them: *‘Did you disbelieve after you had believed?*, that is, have you veiled yourselves from the light of the Truth by the dark attributes of the soul and have taken up abodes in these darknesses after you had been guided and illumined by the light of preparedness and the purity of primordial nature and the guidance of the intellect? *Then taste*, the chastisement of privation for veiling yourselves from the Truth.

[3:107] *But as for those whose faces are whitened, they shall be in God’s mercy*, which is the spirit of connectedness and the holy light and the presential visions of [God’s] beauty, *abiding therein*.

[3:110] *You are the best community [brought forth to men]*, by virtue of being affirmers of the Oneness and upholders of justice, which is His shadow, *enjoining decency and forbidding indecency*, since none but the just one who is an affirmer of the Oneness is able to do that, since he knows what is decent and what is indecent, as has been mentioned already in the interpretation of His words *Thus We appointed you a midmost community* [Q. 2:143]. The Commander of the Believers [‘Alī], peace be upon him, said, ‘We are the midmost saddle, with whom the [ultimate] interpretation ends and to whom the zealous extremist refers”. Thus upon the one who has fallen short [in his

behaviour] they enjoin the decency that will help him attain the station of Oneness; and they forbid the zealous extremist veiled by the union from [the level of] differentiation and by the Oneness from [the level of] multiplicity; **and believing in God**, that is, you stand firm at the station of the Oneness which is the midmost. Such [you are] in every act of excess, immoderation and moderation in matters of character traits. **Had the People of the Scripture believed**, they would have been like you.

[3:111] **They will not harm you, except with a little hurt**, because they are severed from the basis of strength and power; in affairs they follow their soul, which is the locus of enfeeblement and evil, while you are protected by God, drawing your strength from Him, in affairs following the truth, which is the source of vanquishing. Thus their power does not exceed the level of slander by the tongue, wickedness and causing hurt, which is the utmost limit of the soul's capacity. Your power surpasses every [other] power by its ability to vanquish and utterly destroy by virtue of your assumption of the attributes of God, exalted be He. No doubt they retreat before you in battle and are not aided [to victory].

[3:112] **Abasement shall be cast upon them**, because *might belongs, altogether, to God* [Q. 4:139] and none can have a share in it except the one who assumes those character traits [derived] from His attributes by effacing the attributes of mortals, as is the case with the Messenger and the believers, who constitute loci for the manifestation of His might, as He, exalted be He, says: *Yet the [real] might belongs to God and to His Messenger, and to the believers* [Q. 63:8]. Thus the one who opposes them stands in contrareity to the attribute of might, at variance with the mighty ones, such that abasement necessarily attaches itself to him and subsumes him in whatever state he might be, except for a connection that ties him to the people of might, as where God says **save by a rope of God, and a rope of the people**, that is, [except for] some protection-guarantee or covenant; but that tends to me a transient affair without [solid] foundation, dependent on a contrived connection. Their essential attribute is not accepted, that [attribute] which adheres to them that is the abasement originating from the origins of their souls. They have merited severe wrath from God by their distance and their turning away from the truth. Poverty attaches itself to them because of their severance from God in favour of their souls and so He leaves them to the devices of their own souls.

[3:113] **Yet they are not all alike; some of the People of the Scripture are a community upright**, that is, [upright] upon [the path of] God. He then describes them with [reference to] the states of those of uprightness. In other words, there are among them affirmers of Oneness and people of uprightness.

[3:115] *And whatever good you do, you shall not be denied it:* in other words, everything that issues from you that brings you nearness to God is joined to its reward from Him. You shall not be denied anything of that [reward]. God, exalted be He, said: 'Whoever draws near to Me by an inch, I shall draw near to him by an arm's length. And whoever draws near to Me by an arm's length, I shall draw near to him by a fathom. And whoever comes to Me walking, I shall come to him hurrying'. He has also said, 'I am in the company of the one who remembers Me, the intimate of the one who gives thanks to Me, and the obeyer of the one who obeys Me'. In other words, just as you obey Him by purifying your preparedness and orienting yourselves towards Him, He indulges you by effusing [upon you] the effusion in kind and [by] turning to you; *and God knows*, those who guard against that which veils them from Him and so He discloses Himself to them in the measure that the veil recedes.

[3:117] *The likeness of what they expend in the life of this world*, [the life] that is evanescent and its shortlived pleasures, lusting after passions or for show or for a reputation out of vanity, seeking people's praise without seeking God's face thereby, and [seeking] what destroys and totally annihilates of the wind generated by the desires of the soul, [a wind] that carries the cold of your corrupt intentions and false goals, such as the making of a show [infront of others] and the like, *is as the likeness of a wind wherein is a blast that smote the tillage of a people who have wronged themselves*, through associating [others with God] and through disbelief, *such that it destroyed it*, as a retribution from God for their wrongdoing. *God did not wrong them*, by destroying their tillage, *but they*, were wronging themselves, because that [destruction] was caused by their wrongdoing, as they say: be careful, for your hands seal your mouth while you blow.

[3:118] *[O you who believe] do not take as intimates anyone apart from yourselves:* a person's intimate is his closest and most faithful friend, the one who keeps him hidden and is privy to his secrets. Such a friend cannot exist unless the two are united in their purpose, are in accord on religion and in attribute, loving one another for God's sake and not for some [other] purpose, as is said of friends [that they are] one soul in separate bodies. And if he happens not to be a believer, then it is far more likely that he will be secretly an enemy. He then makes clear his hypocrisy and secret enmity with His words: *such men spare nothing to ruin you ... to the end* [of the verse]. For true and pure love can only be between believers in [God's] Oneness, since it is the shadow of [the very] Oneness: it cannot be between those who are veiled as they inhabit the world of contrareity and darkness. Where in this world of theirs is there purity and harmony? Nay, it may be that the all-inclusive human genus brings them close together, sharing as they do in that species, and [in] benefits and delights, and in their need for

cooperation therein. But once what they have sought of benefits and delights is not actualised, they quarrel and fall into mutual hatred. And that [initial] closeness between them dissipates, since it had been the result of something that undergoes change, because the soul is the origination point of change. This-worldly benefits do not remain in the same state, while egocentric pleasures are fleeting; therefore love based upon it does not endure, unlike the former [type of] love, since this [latter] is based on something that by its essence never changes. That [kind of enmity] ensues when it is a matter between them: how [much worse] would it be when the matter is between them and those who oppose them in principle and in attribute. How can light and darkness be of the same nature and how can the sublime and the low be compatible? Thus between those [aforementioned] men there exists real enmity and essential disagreement, the effects of which cannot be hidden, as God makes clear in His words: *Hatred is [even] revealed by their mouths*, because the description of [a person's] essence cannot be concealed. The Prophet said: 'Never does a person hide something except that God makes it manifest in slips of the tongue and the expressions of the face; *and what their breasts conceal is yet greater*, because it is a fire and this is the spark: that is the source and this is its offshoot. *Now We have made clear to you the signs*, the proofs of love and enmity and its causes, *if you understand*, the import of these words.

[3:119] *Lo, there you are, you love them*, as required by the affirmation of Oneness, since the affirmer of Oneness loves all people through the Truth and for the [sake of] the Truth; he seems them connected to his soul in the way that [his] affines and kin [are connected to him], nay, in the way that parts are connected [to a whole]. Thus he regards them through the eyes of divine mercy and lordly tenderness and is sympathetic to them, treating them compassionately, when [the like of him] the people of mercy see them preoccupied with falsehood and tested by fate; but they do not love you by virtue of their being veiled and [their] subsisting in the darkness of the soul and the contrareity of nature. *You believe in the Book*, that is, in the genus of scripture, *all of it*, by virtue of the all-inclusiveness of your knowledge of the Oneness, while they do not believe because of their confinement to their religion and their being veiled by what they follow; *and when they meet you they say, 'We believe'*, out of that hypocrisy of theirs that seeks to procure their evanescent goals; *but when they are alone, they bite at you their fingertips, in rage*, because of the rancour that stems from their essences and [because of] their concealed hatred [for you]. As for the rest [of their enmity], it is manifest.

[3:120] *Yet if you endure*, with patience what God tests you with in the way of hardships, trials and calamities, and remain firm as required by belief in Oneness and obedience [to God], *and guard against*, seeking their assistance in your affairs and

resorting to friendship with them, *their guile will not hurt you at all*, because the one who trusts in God, who endures His test and seeks His assistance and not that of another, shall succeed in securing what he demands, vanquish his opponent, receiving his share of his Lord's good protection. The one who seeks the assistance of another shall be forsaken, left to the devices of his own soul, deprived of the aid of his Lord, as the poet says: 'he who seeks the help of any other than God in what he wants, shall surely have [nothing but] failure and forsakenness for his assistants. *Of what they do*, in the way of schemes, *God is indeed encompassing*, invalidating them and destroying them. They say that if you want to curb [the evil of] the one who envies you, then grow in virtue in yourself, for patience and God-consciousness are among the most beautiful virtues. If you adhere to them, you shall be victorious over your enemies. [3:125] *Yea, if you are patient and fear, and they come against you* ... to the end of the verse: to endure with patience the hardship of struggle and to expend the soul in obedience of God and to bear discomfort in pursuit of God's satisfaction can only take place when there is God-consciousness with the support of the Truth and illumination by the light of certainty and its sureness, and by the sending down of the divine peace and reassurance upon that person. But to be conscious of God while contravening the command of the Truth and inclining to profit and gain, fearing the ruination of the soul can only come about when the soul is broken by the subjugating authority of the heart and the spirit. For constancy and dignity are the attributes of the spirit, while inconstancy and restlessness are the attributes of the soul. Once the authority of the spirit has acquired mastery over the heart and takes its seat [there], it protects that [heart] from falling under the mastery of the attributes of the soul and the [soul's] hosts, such that the heart becomes enamoured of it [the spirit] and feels at peace with it because of its luminosity the pleasures of which are beloved. It is able to fortify itself with it [the spirit] against the soul and its faculties, defeating it, breaking it, thwarting its [potential] overpowering and [repelling] its darkness from itself, rendering it instead meek, obedient and reassured so that it is no longer agitated and it [the soul] becomes illumined by its [the heart's] light. Thereupon mercy comes down and the heart corresponds to the heavenly spiritual realm with respect to its [the soul's] luminosity, its capacity to vanquish what is below it and its love and yearning for what is above it. Thus by that correspondence it [the heart] becomes joined to it [the illumined soul] and is able to draw on its [this soul's] faculties and [draw] its attributes into its [the heart's] acts especially when it [the heart] is stirred and spurns the lower aspect and severs itself in exclusive devotion to the higher aspect by the power of certainty and the trust. It is then able to draw upon the faculties of its [the illumined soul's] capacity to vanquish against the one with whom it [the heart] is angry: this is [the moment of] the



coming down of the angels. But when it [the heart] is anxious and alarmed, changes and becomes fearful or inclines to this world, it is overpowered by the soul and subjugated by it and acquires mastery over it, veiling it by the darkness of its attributes from the light, such that that correspondence is no longer there, the reinforcement [from the spiritual realm] is severed and the angels do not come down.

[3:126] *What God ordained was only as a good tiding to you*, that is, He made that reinforcement [to you] with angels only so that you might rejoice at this good news and the strength of your hearts, your valour, your succour, your vitality might be enhanced in your orientation towards the Truth and disengagement [in preparation] for the wayfaring, *and so that your hearts might be at peace*, and so that the effusion is realised thereby in accordance with the purification [effected] and the successorship [of the earth is granted] in accordance with the relinquishing [of the worldly]. *Victory comes only from God*, not from angels or from any others. So do not be veiled by multiplicity from unity, nor by creatures from the Truth, for these are [merely] loci of manifestation without reality or effect; *the Mighty*, the strong who is victorious by His vanquishing, *the Wise*, who veils His vanquishing power and His assistance in the form of angels out of His wisdom.

[3:127] *And that He might cut off a party of the disbelievers*, that He might have some of them slain in order to strengthen the believers, *or suppress them*, degrade them and humiliate them with defeat to make the believers glorious.

[3:128] *Whether He relents to them*, through their submission, to bolster the numbers of the believers, *or chastises them*, because of their wrongdoing and their persistence in disbelief in order to bring joy to the believers. His words *it is no concern at all of yours* have fallen between both parts of the coordinated sentence within the narrative as a parenthetical lest the Messenger of God lapse and suppose that he is able to have any effect in these matters, and [lest he] become veiled from the affirmation of the Oneness and remains so, and his witnessings in all oaths are changed. In other words, their affair is not your concern, whatever the situation. You are but a mortal commanded to warn. Your duty is to deliver [the message to them] and their affair is with God.

[3:130] *O you who believe, do not exact usury*, in other words, put your trust in God when seeking provision and do not try to acquire it through usury. That is a duty [enjoined] upon you just as it is your duty to trust in Him when seeking victory and [pursuing] the struggle against the enemy, lest you be cowardly despite the protection and the preservation of God [over you]. Know that the recompense of the usurer is the [same as] the recompense of the disbeliever. So beware of [being] such [a person] as he is veiled from His acts, exalted by He, in the same way that the disbeliever is veiled from His attributes and His essence. And the one who is veiled is unable to receive

mercy despite its all-encompassing nature. Therefore, remove the veil through acts of obedience and refraining from contravening [God and the Messenger] so that God's mercy might reach you.

[3:133] *And vie with one another hastening to*, conceal your acts, which veil you from the witnessing of the acts of the truth through His acts. For you are deprived from trusting [in God] and from the garden of the world of the kingdom, which is the self-disclosure of [His] acts, by your inspection of your acts. That is [vie in hastening] to what necessitates the concealment of your acts by His acts and then [to] the garden of the acts by means of acts of obedience, as mentioned [in the *ḥadīth*]: 'I seek refuge in Your pardon from Your retribution'. Since what is meant by the garden here is the garden of the [divine] acts, the width of which has been described as equal to the width of the heavens and the earth, because the unity of the acts is the unity of the world of the kingdom. As for its length, it has been [left to be] reckoned because acts are considered in relation to a widening chain in which every act depends on another act confined to the world of the kingdom [the extent of which] people attempt to reckon. But in terms of length, these [acts] cannot be confined therein or reckoned, because the act is the locus of manifestation for a description and the description is a locus of manifestation for the essence and as such is infinite and limitless. Thus the ones who are veiled from the essence and the attributes can only see the width of this garden, whereas for those who are apparent before God, the One, the Vanquisher, the width of their garden is its very length and since its length is without limit, neither its length or its width can be reckoned; *prepared for those who are wary*, those who guard against the veils of their acts and the idolatry of ascribing acts to other than the Truth.

[3:134] *Those who expend in prosperity and adversity*: states of contrareity do not prevent them from expending, because of the soundness of their trust in God, as they see that all acts are from Him; *and those who restrain their rage*, for the same reason, since they see that any wrong committed against them is by an act of God and so they do not object; and if they were not to have rage [in the first place], their station would be that of [God's] satisfaction and the garden of the attributes; *and who pardon their fellow-men*, for the reason that we have mentioned and because of their seeking refuge in His pardon, exalted be He, from His retribution; *and God loves those who are virtuous*, those who witness the self-disclosures of His acts, exalted be He.

[3:135] *And who when they commit an indecency*, a grave sin by considering their acts as issuing from power within them, *or wrong their souls*, [those who] stint what is due to these by committing minor sins and the manifestation of their souls in these, *remember God*, upon the issuing forth of their acts by seeing them as having occurred as a result of God's power and [who] absolve themselves of these [acts] before Him, seeing that

these are a trial for them from Him, *and pray forgiveness*, asking for their acts to be concealed, [acts] which constitute their sins, by His acts, absolving themselves thereof by affirming that might and power are His alone; *and who shall forgive sins*, that is, the existences of acts, *but God?* In other words, they have realised that there is none to forgive [them] except Him — *and who do not persist in what they did*, when they were unaware and when their souls were manifest, but who repent and returned to Him in terms of their acts, *knowing*, that only God acts.

[3:136] *excellent is the wage of those who work*, according to what the [true] affirmation of the unity of the acts entails.

[3:137] *There have passed away before you [many] ways of life*, smites and calamities from among the things that God has established in His acts as ways of dealing with those who deny the prophets when these affirm the unity of [God's] acts; *so travel in the land and behold*, the vestiges [of those ways] therein so that you might know how was their end came about.

[3:138] *This*, that has been mentioned, *is an exposition for mankind*, of the knowledge concerning the affirmation of the unity of [God's] acts and a differentiating of the God-fearing who are the people fixed (*tamkīn*) in that [knowledge], [from] the repentant who are the people of variegation (*talwīn*), and the persistent [in sin] who are veiled from that [knowledge], being deniers of it. This [exposition] is in addition a guidance, an unveiling for eyewitnessing, an ascertainment and an admonition for those who guard against seeing their acts; or it is guidance for them to the affirmation of the unity of the [divine] attributes and the essence.

[3:139] *Faint not*, in the struggle when the disbelievers have mastery, *neither grieve*, for what has eluded you of victory and [for] those brethren of yours who are injured or who have been martyred, *for you are the uppermost*, in [terms of] level because of your nearness to God and your more exalted degree as the people of God, *if you are*, affirmers of the Oneness; because the affirmer of Oneness considers that what befalls him of trials is from God and so the least of his degrees, if it is not satisfaction [with that predicament], is patient endurance from which he draws strength in such a way that he does not grieve or faint.

[3:140] [*Such*] *days*: [such] events. Any tremendous affair that occurs is called 'a day' or 'days', as [in the expression] where God says *And remind them of the Days of God* [Q. 14:5]. The explanation of 'that God may know' has already been given to mean the manifestation of knowledge at the level of differentiation that is subsequent to the eventuality of known things; *and that He may take witnesses from among you*, those who bear witness to the Truth such that they are distracted from their souls. In other words, We deal out [such] events among mankind for various purposes and [on the

basis of] many wisdoms which are not mentioned, from [allowing for] the actualisation of what [potential] is [contained] in their preparedness, to action in the way of patience, endurance, the strength of certainty and little concern for the soul, its being mastered and suppressed by the heart and so on; and also for the two reasons mentioned [in the verse] and to deliver the believers from sins and coverings that distance them from God through punishment and trial, when these [days] are against them;<sup>54</sup> and to obliterate the disbelievers, to vanquish them and destroy them when these [days] are in their favour. Between the reasons given [by God] comes a parenthetical: *and God loves not the evildoers*, in order that it be known that the one who lacks the attribute of faith and witnessing, as well as [the capacity] to examine [his] sins and [lacks] the strength of steadfastness to perfect [his] certainty, but is present at the battle in pursuit of spoils or for some other purpose, such a person is an evildoer and that God does not love him. [3:143] *You were longing for death before you met it*, [to the end of] the verse: every person of certainty whose certainty is not a natural disposition but a passing inclination will always in some of his states long for things and claim certain states in accordance with [the desires of] his soul; likewise [when he is in] a state of other than certainty. When the heart comes forward then he is sincere, so long as he is qualified by that [state of certainty]. But when in another state and at the turning away [of his heart], there remains no trace of that [certainty]. Similar is the case with the one who has not witnessed a [particular] state or experienced it. It may be that he longs for it by virtue of its being formed [as an image] in his soul and the fact that he is not harmed by it when it is [simply] an image. However, when it does take place and he is tried [with it], he is unable to bear its hardships, as is related of Sumnūn the lover,<sup>55</sup> may God have mercy upon him, when he said in one of his verses:

‘However You wish, then test me!’

He was then afflicted with urine retention (*asr*) but was unable to bear the trial. He would wander the streets and give children things to play with such as walnuts, saying to them, ‘Pray for this old man of yours, the liar’. It is in this sense that the poet says:

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<sup>54</sup> In other words, when the events are not in favour of believers but, as Kāshānī goes on to explain, are (at least on the face of it) in favour of the disbelievers.

<sup>55</sup> On Sumnūn (or Samnūn, d. 298/910), an early Sufi shaykh of the Baghdad school, famed for his irrepressible zeal in the articulation of the concept of ‘the love of God’, whence his nickname *al-muḥibb*, ‘the lover’. Sumnūn was so convinced that the only measure of true love of God is the endurance of near unbearable trials that when (see his verse) he invoked such a trial upon himself and failed, he thereafter referred to himself as ‘the liar’, *al-kadhbāb*, which was later understood as a humbling admission of the frailty of the human character, as opposed to a frivolous act of pretense on his part: see B. Reinert, ‘Samnūn b. Ḥamza’, *EI2*, IX, 873.

‘[Only] when the coward finds himself alone in some place, does he seek the challenge and lines up for battle, all alone’.

Thus a state is of little concern until it becomes a station and can only be considered a station when the person has been tried in that very abode.<sup>56</sup> If he makes it through the trial then it [his station] is good. This is one of the benefits of the dealing out of the days between them, that they might be trained in [the presence of] death and their certainty be strengthened, their patience abound and their station realised through the witnessing, as He says: *Now you have seen it*, with the slaying of your brethren before your, *as you*, witnessed that. Therein is a rebuke for them, for that their certainty was a state and not a station,<sup>57</sup> which is why they have failed [to dwell] in the abode [of that station].

[3:144] *Muhammad is only a messenger*, that is, he is only a mortal messenger who will pass away or be slain like other prophets before him. Thus the one who is certain in his religion and follows an insight from his Lord does not turn back [from his religion] should the Messenger die or be slain, nor does he neglect the path that he followed, because he is struggling for the sake of his Lord and not the Messenger, as was the case with the companions of former prophets. And as Anas, the uncle of Anas b. Mālik said on the day of [the battle of] Uhud, when [false] rumours circulated that the Messenger of God, peace be upon him, had been killed and when this news spread and the Muslims were defeated, and it reached him [Anas] that some were saying, ‘Would that someone secure for us a guarantee of safety from Abū Sufyān!’ and that the hypocrites were saying, ‘Were he a [true] prophet, he would not have been killed’, he [Anas] said, ‘My fellow men: if Muḥammad has indeed been slain, then [know that] Muḥammad’s Lord is Living and does not die! What, in any case, do you hope to do with your lives after the Messenger of God [has gone]? So fight in the way that he fought and die upon that [religion] which he died!’ He [Anas] then said, ‘O Lord, I apologise to You for what they have said and absolve myself before You of their behaviour’. He then seized his sword and fought until he was slain. *If any man should turn back on his heels, he will not harm God in any way*, but will have harmed himself by his hypocrisy and the

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<sup>56</sup> A person ‘abides’ in a station in the sense that it defines his spiritual location and becomes like a dwelling (*mawṭin*) for him (contrast this with temporary passage through ‘waystations’, *manāzil*). Naturally, the experience of the abode differs in the case of the one who has just arrived at a particular station from one who has ‘dwelt’ there far longer. To confirm the station one needs to successfully undergo the trials associated with the meriting of that station.

<sup>57</sup> On the difference between ‘states’, which are transient, and ‘stations’, which are fixed qualities see Chittick 1989:274ff.

weakness of his certainty, *and God will requite those that are thankful*, for the grace of Islam, the likes of Anas b. al-Naḍr and men of certainty of his mettle.

[3:145] *It is not for any soul to die, save by the leave of God, a prescribed term*, and so the one who has certainty shall witness the meaning of this and find himself the most valiant of men, as Ḥātim b. al-Aṣamm related of himself in what he witnessed with Shaqīq al-Balkhī, may God have mercy on both, in one of the campaigns into Khurāsān. He relates, ‘Shaqīq found me as the battle was raging. He asked me, “How do you find your heart O Ḥātim?”. I replied, “Like on my wedding night, [wavering] between two states”. He then put down his weapons, saying, “As for me, mine is like this”, and laid his head down on his shield. He slept [so deeply] as the battle raged, you could hear him snoring. That is the ultimate in terms of the heart being reassured by God and its confidence in Him by virtue of the strength of its certainty.

[3:151] *We will cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers*, [to the end of] the verse: He has ordained that the terror cast into the hearts of the disbelievers be caused by their association of others [with Him]. For valour and all the other virtues are forms of moderation within the faculties of the soul against that the shadow of the Oneness should be cast on it upon its illumination by the light of the heart which is itself illuminated by the light of the Oneness. As such these [virtues] can only be perfected for the affirmer of the Oneness who has certainty in his affirmation of the Oneness. As for the one who associates others [with God], because he is veiled from the source of strength and power by what he associates with God of existents that are blemished by nonexistence and the contingency (*imkān*) of whose existence is [necessarily] subtle and weak and which in itself possesses no strength, existence or essence in reality and regarding whose existence God has not sent down any definitive proof of its existence in the first place, given that its nonexistence has been realised in accordance with [the nature of] its [contingent] essence, such [an associating person] possesses nothing but incapacity, cowardice and all vices, since he cannot be stronger than the object of his worship, even if he should be given a turn of fortune, a show of force or a dash of bravery then this will be something without foundation, fixedness or endurance, like the [short] fire of the arfaj bush;<sup>58</sup> such were the [shortlived] fortunes of the [Meccan] polytheists.

[3:152] *God has been true to His promise*, that is, His promise to you of assistance if you are patient and Godfearing. So long as you remain in this state of yours, with [your] intense endurance of the struggle and certainty of [God’s] assistance, remaining firm upon that certainty, united in word in your orientation towards the Truth, wary of

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<sup>58</sup> Rhanterium epapposum, common to the desert areas of the Arabian peninsula.

contravening the Messenger and the inclining of [your] souls to the adornments of this world and away from the truth, struggling for the sake of God and not for this world, then God will be with you granting you assistance and fulfilling the promise. Indeed you were, by His leave, cutting them down and making them retreat, *until you lost heart*, that is, [until] you became cowardly and weakness intruded into your certainty and the your belief spoiling what it would have deserved by right by allowing it to be fraudulent in [the coveting of] the spoils, *and you quarrelled*, over the conduct of the battle after having been in accord. You were not patient for the share of this world, but contravened the Messenger by ignoring his command to you to hold your position and you inclined to the adornments of this world, *after He had shown you what you longed for*, in the way of victory and spoils, when the time for giving thanks to God and turning to him with zeal was upon you. [Instead] you were distracted from Him, the noblest of you desiring the Hereafter and the rest desiring this world, but there remained none who desired God. [Thus] He withheld His assistance from you, *then He turned you away from them, so that He might try you*, with what you did. And that trial was a kindness and a bounty to you [from Him], *and God is Bounteous to the believers*, in all states, either through [His] assistance [to them] or through trial. Indeed trial is a bounty and a subtle kindness [to believers] so that they might come to know that the [spiritual] states of servants attract the manifestations of the descriptions of the Truth onto them. And so what they have prepared their souls for is bestowed on them from God, as has been mentioned already in His words ‘the obeyer of the one who is obedient to Me’. God is with them as they are with Him; and lest they sleep on their states without [seeking to acquire] the natural dispositions and so that they might be trained [spiritually] to be patient in adversity and to remain firm in the abodes [of their spiritual stations] and to become fixed in certainty making this a natural disposition of theirs and a station, and that they might verify [the truth of] that *God does not alter the state of a people unless they have altered the state of their souls* [Q. 13:11], and so that they might not incline to this world and its adornments or be distracted from the Truth or sell it in exchange for this world and the Hereafter; and so that it might be a punishment hastened for some of them now in order for them to be purged of their sins and to attain the degree of witnessing by the removal of the veils, especially the veil of the love of one’s soul, and so that they might then encounter God as pure ones. That is why He says *yet now He has pardoned you* [Q. 3:152], for the trial was the cause of the pardon.

[3:153] *so He rewarded you with grief for grief*, that is, He turned you away from them and rewarded you with grief because of a grief that befell God’s Messenger from your part when you disobeyed him and lost heart and quarreled. Or [it means] grief after

grief, doubled, so that you might be trained to be patient and to remain firm in adversity, and so that you might become accustomed to seeing power, victory and spoils and all things as being from God and not from your own souls, *so that you might not grieve for what eluded you*, of shares and benefits, *neither for what befell you*, of grief and harm.

[3:154] *Then*, He spared you the grief by [granting you] security and casting sleep upon the truthful party and not the [party of the] hypocrites, *whose own souls distressed them*, not the soul of the Messenger, nor indeed those who manifested an indication [that they were deserving] of [God's] pardon; *those for whom it had been appointed that they be slain would have sallied forth to the places where they were to lie*, because of His statement *No affliction befalls in the earth or in your souls but it is in a Book, before We bring it about* [Q. 57:22], *that God might try what was in your breasts*, in other words, so that God might test what is in your preparedness of [the potential] truthfulness, sincerity, certainty, patience, trust in God, and disengagement, and all the other [virtuous] traits and stations, in order to bring them forth from potentiality to actuality; *and that He might prove what was in your hearts*, meaning, so that He might deliver those [potentials], which have sallied forth out of the hiding place of the breast and into the storehouse of the heart, from the stumbling blocks that are the evil whisperings of Satan, base states and the passing inclinations of the soul...For the trial is one of God's scourges by which He drives His servants towards Him by purifying them of the attributes of the soul and making manifest the perfections [dormant] in them so that they are devoted completely to Him instead of creatures and to the Truth instead of the soul. That is why it has always been the prophets, followed by the friends [of God], and then the most exemplary [of servants] that have been charged with such [trials]. The Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, as an illustration of his excellence said, 'No prophet has suffered hurt to the extent that I have'. It is as though he were saying, 'No prophet has been purified like I have'. Good are the words of the one who said:

'How excellent are calamities, for verily they bring rust to the ignoble, but lustre to the free'.

For whatever manifests on either of the two [of rust or lustre] is only what is hidden in that person's preparedness, in the same way that they say, 'At the test a man is either honoured or disgraced'.

[3:155] [*Satan*] *made them slip*, that is, he asked them to slip and called them to do so, the slip being the turning away [from the battle], *through some of what they had earned*, in the way of sins. For Satan is only able to whisper to people and to fulfil his task when there is an opportunity through the smallest darkness in the heart resulting from a sin



or a motion of the soul, as they say: the sin that follows a sin is the punishment of the former [sin]; *but God pardoned them*, by their apology and their remorse;

[3:156] *so that God may make that anguish in their hearts*, in other words, that He might make that statement and belief<sup>59</sup> a constraint, a straitening and a grief in their hearts for considering that death or slaying is caused by an act [of man]. Had they been people of certainty affirmers of the Oneness they would have seen that it is [all] from God and their breasts would have been expanded [embracing God]. *For God gives life*, to whom He will, be they on journey or in a struggle or otherwise; *and He gives death*, to whom He will in the towns or otherwise.

[3:157] [*And if you are slain in God's way, or die*] *forgiveness from God and mercy*, that is, your bliss in the Hereafter in terms of the garden of the acts and the garden of the attributes is better for you than that [bliss and reward] of this world, since you are working towards the Hereafter.

[3:158] [*And if you die or are slain*] *it is to God you shall be mustered*, [you shall be mustered] to the place of your affirmation of the Oneness. Thus your state after death will be better than your state before it.

[3:159] *It was by the mercy of God*, that is, by your possession of the attribute of mercy from [His Name] the Merciful, in other words, a complete, perfect and abundant mercy, which is an attribute from the totality of God's attributes that is a concomitant of your divinely-bestowed existence and not [from your] mortal existence, *that you were lenient with them; had you been harsh*, possessing the attributes of the soul from which derive harshness and fierceness of heart, *they would have dispersed from about you*, because the divine mercy that precipitates their love for you brings them together. *So pardon them*, for the offences they have committed against you, for you see that it is from God from the perspective of [your] belief in the Oneness and because your station is too exalted for that you should be hurt by the actions of mortals or that you should be infuriated by their acts or that you should desire to satisfy your fury by taking revenge on them; *and ask [God's] forgiveness for them*, for what relates to [offences against] the obligations due to God, on account of their forgetfulness, their remorse and their apology, *and consult with them*, in the matter of war and other things, in consideration of them and out of respect. But when you are resolved, then leave the matter to God by relying on Him and seeing that all acts, including conquest, victory and knowledge of what is the most expedient and best-guided [decision] is from Him

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<sup>59</sup> That is, the belief that had their brethren not set out on campaigns and had they stayed behind they would not have been slain, as stated in the first part of this verse.

and not from yourself, neither from those with whom you consult. He then verifies the meaning of reliance [on God] and affirmation of [His] Oneness in acts by saying:

[3:160] *If God helps you...* to the end [of the verse: *then none can overcome you; but if He forsakes you, then who is there who can help you after Him? Therefore on God let the believers rely*].

[3:161] *It is not for a prophet [to be fraudulent]*, given the remoteness of the station of prophethood and the immunity of prophets from all vices and the impossibility of such [behaviour] issuing from them, removed as they are from the attributes of mortals, immune to the effects of the summonings of the soul and Satan on them, subsisting in God and possessing of His attributes; [*whoever defrauds*] *shall bring what he has defrauded*, that is, he shall appear in the form of his defrauding, exactly in [the form of] what he had defrauded.

[3:162] *Is he who follows God's beatitude*, namely, [is he who follows] the prophet through the station of beatitude, which is the garden of the attributes, by his [the prophet's] possession of the attributes of God, and the defrauder who is at the station of wrath by virtue of his being veiled by his own attributes, *and whose abode is*, the lowest pits of the dark soul: are they the same?

[3:163] *They are of degrees*: that is, each of the people of the beatitude and the people of wrath are of varying degrees, or they differ from each other by a variance in degree.

[3:165] *Say: It is from yourselves*: this [statement] does not contradict [His other statement] *Say: Everything is from God* [Q. 4:78], because the agent cause in all cases is the Truth, exalted be He, while the receptive cause is themselves. The agent effuses only in the measure that befits the [receiving] preparedness and is required by it. Thus from the perspective of the agent it is from God and from the perspective of the recipient it is from themselves. The preparedness of souls is either innate or accidental. The innate derives from His holiest effusion in accordance with His will. The accidental issues as required by His decree, which aspect also ultimately derives from Him. From another perspective, what is from themselves is also from God, if one considers His Oneness, for there is nothing else there.

[3:166] *and that He might know the believers*.

[3:167] *And that He might also know the hypocrites*, that is, so that the believers and the hypocrites might be distinguished at the level of differentiated knowledge.

[3:169] *Count not those who were slain in God's way*, whether their slaying was the result of the lesser struggle and the expending of the soul for the sake of God's satisfaction, or whether through the greater struggle and the breaking of the soul and the suppression of caprices by means of spiritual discipline: *as dead, but rather, living with their Lord*, the real life, disengaged from the filth of natural traits, brought near to

the Holy Presence, *provided for [by Him]*, with spiritual provisions, namely, gnosés, realities and the irradiation of lights and are provided for in the formal garden in the way that all the living are provided for. For there are levels in the gardens, some of which are spiritual and some formal. In each of the spiritual and the formal there are degrees [merited] in accordance with the works [performed]. The spiritual [levels] are the garden of the Essence and the garden of the attributes and the superiority of certain degrees over other degrees within them is relative to the varying superiority of the degrees of the people of God's power and those of the angelic realm. The formal one is the garden of the acts whose varying degrees of superiority is relative to the varying degrees of superiority of the world of the kingdom that is the upper heavens and the gardens of this world. It is related from the Prophet that he said: 'When your brothers were struck down in [the battle of] Uḥud, God placed their spirits in hollowed-out forms of green birds circling in flight over the rivers of the Garden, eating of its fruits then returning to golden lanterns hung in the shadow of the Throne'. The green birds are an allusion to the celestial bodies, and the lanterns are the stars. In other words, they attach themselves to the luminous celestial bodies because of their purity. The rivers of the Garden are the springs and watering-places of knowledge; its fruits are the states and the gnosés; as for the formal rivers and fruits are commensurate with their spiritual or formal garden. For every thing that exists in this world of foods, drinks, spouses, garments and all pleasures and delights exists in the Hereafter and in the various strata of the heavens [but] more pleasurable and purer than those of this world. [3:170] *Joyful in what God has given them of His bounty*, in the way of an honouring, graces and nearness to God, *and rejoicing for*, the state of their brethren, *those who have not joined them but are left behind*, and have not yet attained degrees like theirs [being as they are] behind them, because they will be made joyous soon with the like of their state and will join them, *that no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve*: an inclusive substitution for 'those who' (*alladhīna*), that is to say, they rejoice [for them] that they shall be safe and that no fear shall befall them, and that neither shall they grieve.

[3:171] *Rejoicing in grace*, that is, their safety is by virtue of a tremendous grace the quintessence of which cannot be known, this being the garden of the attributes, by the actualisation for them of the station of beatitude, mentioned further on, *and bounty*, and in addition to that [garden] the garden of the Essence and total safety from the remainder of existence. That is the perfection of their being witnesses of God. Still, God does not let the wage of their belief go to waste, and that is the garden of the acts and the reward of works.

[3:172] *[For] those who responded to God*, by being annihilated in the Essential unity, *and to the Messenger*, with the station of true uprightness, *after the wounds*, that is, the breaking of the soul, *had afflicted them, for all those who were virtuous*, who stood firm at the station of witnessing, *and were wary*, of their remainders, *shall be a great wage*, after faith, and that is the spirit of the witnessing.

[3:173] *Those to whom people said*, before their arrival at the witnessing, *'The people have gathered against you, therefore fear them'*, in other words, they have taken into account your existence and reckon with, so you reckon with them; *but that*, statement, *increased them in faith*, that is, in certainty and in affirmation of the Oneness by negating any other [than God] and not being concerned by it. By negating what is other than God they attained the very affirmation of God when they said: *'God is sufficient for us*. So they witnessed Him before returning to the differentiated mode of the attributes with uprightness, saying: *an excellent Guardian is He'*, which are the words that Abraham, peace be upon him, said when he was cast into the fire and it became coolness and safety for him [cf. Q. 21:69].

[3:174] *So they returned with grace and bounty from God*, that is, they returned by means of the existence deriving from [His Name] the Truth to the garden of the attributes and the Essence, as was mentioned earlier; *and evil*, the remainder and the sight of other [than God], *touched them not, and they followed the beatitude of God*, which is the garden of the attributes during their state of wayfaring when they did not know what had been hidden for them of things that delight the eye, and that is the garden of the Essence referred to in His words: *and God is of bounty abounding*. For 'bounty' is an increase [granted] over beatitude.

[3:175] *[That is only Satan] giving fear to [or of] his friends*, those people who are veiled by their own souls like him, or [it means] that he is making you fear his friends; *therefore do not fear them*, and do not reckon with their existence, *but fear Me, if you are*, affirmers of the Oneness. In other words, do not fear anyone other than Me, because that [other] has no existence in itself and no effect.

[3:176] *Let them not grieve you those that vie with one another in unbelief*, given their innate veiledness and essential darkness, for fear that they might hurt you; *they will not hurt God at all*: the indulging of the disbelievers and the extending of their lifespans are [in fact] a cause for the intensity of their chastisement, their utter ignominy and abasement, since the longer their lifespan the more they become veiled and distant and the more they become distant from the Truth, with His unassailable might, the more they increase in ignominy.

[3:179] *It is not God's purpose to leave the believers in the state in which you are*, of outward submission and affirmation [of belief] by the tongue, *till He shall distinguish the*

*evil*, in the way of the attributes of the soul, the doubts of estimation, the shares of Satan, or the exigencies of desire, from the wholesome aspects of the attributes of the heart, such as sincerity, certainty, unveiling, the witnessings of the spirit, the sweet talk of the innermost heart and its night conversings, so that gnosis and love of God might be made pure through the testing [of you by God] and the befalling among you of trials and afflictions. *And it is not God's purpose to apprise you of*, the Unseen of your existence in terms of the realities and states that are dormant in you without the medium of the Messenger, because of the great gulf that separates you from Him, the nonexistence of any correspondence [between you and God] and the absence of preparedness to receive from Him; *but God chooses of His messengers whom He will*, and apprises him of His mysteries and realities through the unveiling so that He might guide you to what is hidden from you of the treasure troves of your existence and His mysteries on account of the generic compatibility in terms of the soul between you and him that necessitates the possibility of your being guided by him. *So believe in God and His messengers*, with an affirmation of the heart and a will and adherence to the divine law so that you might be able to receive and accept [such things] from them; *and if you [continue to] believe*, after that faith through verification and wayfaring towards certainty and observance of the spiritual path, *and are wary*, [guarding against] the egocentric veils and the bars to wayfaring, *then yours shall be a great wage*, by way of the unveiling of reality. The bounty that God has granted them in the way of property, knowledge, power and soul, which they do not expend in the way of God on those who deserve [them], and the [spiritually] prepared, as well as the prophets and the truthful ones in order to protect them or to be annihilated in God,

[3:180] *what they were niggardly with, they shall have hung around their necks on the Day of Resurrection*: in other words, He will make [all] that [bounty] a fetter around their necks and a cause for their confinement and privation from the spirit of God and His mercy, and a necessitating cause of their ignominy and their veiling from the light of His beauty because of their love of, and attachment to, it; *and to God belongs the inheritance of the heavens and the earth*, in terms of souls and their attributes, such as the faculties, powers, knowledge, properties and all that falls under the name of existent: how then can they be niggardly towards Him with what is His property?

[3:181] [Regarding His words from] *verily God has heard* to where He says:

[3:183] *if you are truthful?*: it is related that for the prophets of the Children of Israel the miraculous proof [of their prophethood] was that they would bring forth an offering and invoke God whereupon a fire would come down from the heaven and consume it. The interpretation of this is that they would bring forth their souls seeking nearness to God by them and they would invoke God through renunciation and

devotion whereafter the fire of love would come down from the heaven of the spirit and consume this [offering of theirs] and annihilate it in the Oneness, whereupon their prophethood would be [proven as] authentic and would become manifest. The common folk of the Children of Israel came to hear of this and came to believe in its outward form, even if this should be possible in the world of [God's] power. They thus required from every prophet that sign. They also falsely believed that 'to lend to God' — which means to consecrate wealth in the way of God by expending in order to receive the full reward, and to consecrate [one's] acts and attributes by effacing them through the wayfaring and replace them with the attributes of the Truth and His acts and to actualise the station of the substitutes (*abdāl*)<sup>60</sup> — meant that the Truth was poor and that they were rich. Or, it means that they contested contemptuously the prophets in both instances after they had understood.

[3:188] *Do not reckon that those who rejoice in what they have brought*, those who are delighted by what they have done of acts of obedience or selflessness and every good deed and are veiled by the sight of these [deeds], *and who love to be praised*, that is, that people should praise them, and who are thus veiled by the accidental praise and commendations of people, or [who love] that they should be praiseworthy in the eyes of God for this same reason, *for what they have not done*, but what God has done through their hands, since there is no act that is not God's — *And God created you and whatever you do* [Q. 37:96] — [*do not reckon them*] saved from the chastisement of privation, *and there shall be a painful chastisement for them*, because of the place of their preparedness and their being veiled from what is in it. They should have by right attributed [all] merit and virtuous act to God and declared themselves quit of any power or strength on their part not being His, and not to have become veiled by seeing the act as issuing from themselves and to expect thereby commendation or praise.

[3:189] *To God belongs the kingdom of the heavens and of the earth*: nothing of it belongs to anyone else that they should then give of it to another person and be self-satisfied with their gift; *and God has power over all things*, no one other than Him has the power to act in anyway that he should then be pleased to see it and rejoice in it a rejoicing of self-centered admiration.

[3:191] *Those who remember God*, in all states and in all configurations, *standing*, at the station of the spirit witnessing, *and sitting*, at the locus of the heart [remembering Him] through unveilings, *and on their sides*, that is, in their fluctuations at the place of the soul by means of the struggle, *and reflect*, with their pith, that is, their intellects

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<sup>60</sup> On these spiritual realities, or beings, see Hussein La-Shay', 'Abdāl', *Encyclopaedia Islamica*, eds W. Madelung and F. Daftary, Leiden: Brill, 2010, I, 303.

pure of the blemishes of estimation, *upon the creation of*, the world of spirits and bodies, saying [the following] upon the witnessing: *'Our Lord, You have not created this*, creation, *as falsehood*, that is, as something other than You, for what is other than the truth is falsehood; rather You have made it to be Your Names and the loci for the manifestations of Your attributes. *Glory be to You!*: we exalt You above that there should be anything other than You, that is, that anything should be compared to Your uniqueness or that it should duplicate Your Oneness. *So guard us against the chastisement*, of the fire of being veiled by engendered things from Your acts and by the acts from Your attributes and by Your attributes from Your Essence, an absolute guarding that is complete and sufficient.

[3:192] *Our Lord, whomever You admit into the Fire*, by way of privation, *You will have abased him*, by the existence of the remainder that is entirely humiliation, shame and disgrace; *and none shall they have, these evildoers*, who have associated others [with God] by seeing the other absolutely or [seeing] the remainder, *as helpers*.

[3:193] *Our Lord, we have heard*, with the hearing channels of our hearts, *a caller*, from our innermost secrets, which constitute the shore of the right valley of the spirit, *calling to*, the belief of the eyewitnessing, *saying, "Believe in your Lord!"*, that is, "Witness your Lord", and so we witnessed. *So, our Lord, forgive us*, the sins of our attributes through Your attributes, *and absolve us of*, the evil deeds of our acts by a vision of Your acts, *and receive us*, from our essences among the company of the pious substitutes whom You receive from their essences with Your essence, and not those pious who remain in the same state at the station of the effacement of the attributes who are not ready to be received totally.

[3:194] *Our Lord, grant us what You have promised us through*, [our] following of, *Your messengers*, or of what is borne by Your messengers in the way of subsistence after annihilation and uprightness through the existence bestowed after the affirmation of [Your] Oneness; *and abase us not on the Day of*, the Greater, *Resurrection*, and the moment when creatures shall be brought forth before God, the One, the Vanquisher, by leaving us to be veiled by the Oneness from the multiplicity and by the union from the differentiation. *You will not fail the tryst'*, by leaving behind us a station at which we will not have arrived.

[3:195] *And their Lord answers them, 'I do not let the labour of any labourer among you go to waste, be it a male*, of the heart (*qalb*), in the way of the works of the heart such as sincerity, certainty and unveiling, *or a female*, of the soul, in the way of the works of the mould (*qālib*) such as acts of obedience, struggle and spiritual discipline — *the one of you is as the other*: you are united by one origin and one reality that is the human spirit, in other words, you are created from one another and I will not reward one and

deny another; *and those who emigrated*, from the abodes of the things familiar to the soul, *and were expelled from*, the habitations of its attributes; or [read it as] those who emigrated from the states in which they were delighting and were expelled from their stations, in which they dwelt, *and who suffered hurt in My way*, that is, they were tested along the way of the wayfaring in My acts with afflictions, ordeals, calamities and trials so that they might be trained through patience and that by trusting in the way of the wayfaring in My attributes they might triumph with the assaults of the self-disclosures of the Majesty, the Tremendousness and the Greatness and thus arrive at the beatitude; *and fought*, the rest through struggling for My sake, *and were slain*, annihilated totally in Me — *them I shall surely absolve of their evil deeds*, all of them, minor and grave, meaning, the evil deeds of their remainders, *and I shall admit them to*, the three gardens mentioned, *as a reward*, a compensation for what I have taken from them of the three existences. *And God — with Him is the fairest reward*: the absolute reward from which nothing can be outstanding cannot be with anyone other than Him, which is why He says [first] ‘And God...’, since this is the Name that combines all of the attributes. It would not have been correct for Him to say ‘And the Compassionate One...’ or any other Name in this instance except the Name of the Essence.

[3:196] *Do not be deluded by the going to and fro of the disbelievers*, those who have been veiled from the affirmation of the Oneness, which is the religion of the truth with respect to all stations and states;

[3:197] *a little enjoyment*, that is, this veiledness by stations and fluctuation within them is but a little enjoyment, *then their abode is Hell*, privation — *an evil cradling!*

[3:198] *But those who fear their Lord*, from among the believers, that is, those who have disengaged from the three forms of existence shall have the three gardens — *a hospitality*, prepared, *from God Himself*.

[3:199] *Verily, there are some among the People of the Scripture*, that is, the ones who are veiled from the affirmation of Oneness and the ones described with the attribute of fluctuation in states and stations, *who believe in God*, [who] verify the affirmation of the unity of the Essence, *and what has been revealed to you*, of the knowledge of the affirmation of the Oneness and uprightness, *and what has been revealed to them*, of the knowledge of the origin<sup>61</sup> and the final return, *humble before God*, receptive to the self-disclosure of the Essence, *not purchasing with the verses of God*, which are the self-disclosures of His attributes with the price of the remnants (*baqiyya*), described here as a paltry one. *Those — their wage*, of the mentioned gardens, *is with their Lord. God is swift at reckoning*, reckoning with them and recompensing them such that He requites

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<sup>61</sup> Origin, here, (*mabdaʿ*), denotes the first point of motion in the engendered cosmos.



the remnants of those of whom something has remained, or He rewards these remnants in accordance with the degrees merited in the three abodes.

[3:200] *O you who believe, be patient*, for God, *and vie in patience*, with God, *and be steadfast*, in God, that is, be patient at the station of the soul by struggling, and vie in patience at the station of the heart with the assaults of the self-disclosures of the attributes of Majesty through the unveiling, and be steadfast in your essences at the station of the spirit through the witnessing so that you might not be overcome by any languor or neglectfulness or absence because of any variegations; *and fear God*, at the station of patience, guarding against contravening [Him], or making a show [of your deeds], and at the vying in patience [by guarding] against becoming resistant and self-satisfied, and when being steadfast [by guarding] against [your spiritually untransformed] remnants and [against] becoming crude, so that you might prosper with real timeless prosperity, [a prosperity] beyond which there is no other prosperity, God willing.

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[4:1] *O people, fear your Lord:* be wary of claiming for yourselves His attribute when good things issue from you. Rather, adopt that attribute as a shield for you when good issues from you and say that it has issued from the Absolute Powerful, *Who created you of a single soul*, which is the universal rational-speech faculty that is the heart of the world, being the real Adam, *and from it created its mate*, that is, the animal soul that issues from it. They say that she was created from his left breast-bone from the aspect that is turned towards the world of engenderment, which is weaker than the aspect oriented towards the Truth. Were it not for its [the single soul's] mate, he [Adam] would not have been made to descend to this world, as is commonly known. Iblis seduced her first and by leading her astray he found the means to lead Adam astray. There is no doubt that corporeal attachment does not materialise except through the medium of this [animal soul]; *and He scattered from the pair of them many men*, that is, possessors of hearts who yearn for their father [Adam], *and women*, possessors of souls and natures yearning for their mother [his mate], *and fear God*, in His essence against affirming your existence and make it a shield for you when your remnants become manifest upon the annihilation in the Oneness lest you become veiled by inspecting the annihilation [as from you], *by Whom*, [since it is by Him] and not by yourselves that, *you claim [your rights] from one another and kinship ties:* in other words, be wary of severing the true kinship ties, that is, the near of kin who are the sublime points of origin, the disengaged realities (*mufāraqāt*) and the spirits of prophets and saints by not loving them, and make this love a protection for you so that you are able to actualise your felicities and perfections. For the severing of kinship ties by the absence of love is to be oriented away from conjunction and unity towards separation and multiplicity and constitutes the true loathing and the total distance from the Side of the Truth, exalted be He. That is why the Prophet said: 'The maintenance of kinship ties increases one's lifespan'; in other words, it necessarily results in abiding subsistence. Know also that kinship ties outwardly represent the form of true conjunction inwardly. The outward works like the inward in terms of the affirmation of Oneness and thus the one who is unable to look after the outward is more likely not to be able to look after the inward. *Surely God has been watchful over you*, watching over you lest you should be veiled from Him by the manifesting of one of your attributes or some of your remnants and then suffer chastisement.

[4:2] *Give*, your orphaned spiritual faculties, who have been severed from the nurture of the holy spirit, their father, *their property*, that is, their objects of knowledge and

perfections and use these to nurture them; *and do not exchange the evil*, that are the sensory objects, the imagined things, evil insinuations and the exigencies of estimation and all the [other] faculties of the soul, these being its [the soul's] property, *for the good*, that is their property; *and absorb not their property into your property*, that is to say, do not mix these such that truth and falsehood come to resemble one another and use these [properties] to actualise sensory pleasures and egoistic perfections in order to profit from them in your despicable this-worldly pursuits so that you end up making them the nourishment of your souls: *surely that is a great crime*, a cause for veiledness and privation.

[4:31] *If you avoid what is forbidden to you of grave sins*, in the way of affirming any other [than God] in existence, that which is an [idolatrous] act of association in essence, in attribute and in fact. For the gravest of sins is the affirmation of an existence other than His existence, exalted be He, as was said [to man]: the sin of your very existence alone is an immeasurable sin; then [the gravest is] to affirm a duality in [His] essence by affirming that the attributes are additional to it, as the Commander of the Believers said: 'Sincere belief in Him [as One] is not to ascribe attributes to Him'; *We will absolve you of your evil deeds*, by the manifestation of the soul or the heart in the form of one of its attributes sometimes, for after the manifestation of the light of the affirmation of the Oneness, these [attributes] are unable to withstand; *and admit you by an honourable gate*, being the presence of the source of the union, outside of which there is no glory.

[4:32] *Do not covet that in which God has preferred some of you above others*, in the way of perfections that are appointed in accordance with the original forms of preparedness, for every preparedness entails in itself from pre-eternity a perfection and a felicity that corresponds to it. The actualisation of such a specific perfection to some other [than the one specified] is impossible, which is why it is referred to with the expression 'to covet', which is when a person demands what cannot be actualised for him because of the lack of any similarity. *To men*, that is, to those individuals who have arrived, *a share from what they have earned*, by the light of their original preparedness, *and to women*, that is, the deficient ones who fall short of the arrival, *a share from what they have earned*, commensurate with their preparedness. *And ask God of His bounty*, that is, ask Him to effuse a perfection that is entailed by your preparedness through purgation and purification so that nothing should come between you and Him that would cause you to be veiled and to thus be chastised by the fires of privation from Him. *God is ever Knower of all things*, that are unknown to you latent as they are in potentiality in your preparednesses, and answers your call in accordance with what is appropriate for you, as He says: *And He gives you of all that you ask of Him* [Q. 14:34], that is, [He responds to

you] in the tongue of [your] preparedness by which none call on Him but He responds to them, as He says: *And your Lord has said, 'Call on Me and I will respond to you'* [Q. 40:60].

[4:36] *And worship God*, make Him the specific object of your orientation and for your your annihilation in Him, that which is the ultimate in self-abasement [before God]; *and associate nothing with Him*, by affirming His existence. *Be kind to parents*, be kind in spirit and soul these two from which the heart is generated, for it is your reality: you are nothing but that [heart]. Fulfil your duties towards them and treat them with true consideration by drawing on the effusion of the former [the spirit] and orienting yourselves towards in submission to it and in reverence, and by cleansing the latter [the soul] and preserving it from the filth of the love of this world and from its being abased by covetousness and greed and the like of these or by the evil of Satan and his enmity towards it; help it through compassion and zeal by procuring for it what is its due and preventing it from its shares; *and the near kindred*, the one who truly corresponds to you in kinship on account of the nearness in terms of original preparedness and spiritual resemblance; *and to orphans*, those who are prepared but severed from the light of the holy spirit, which is the true father [of these orphans], by being veiled from it, *and to the needy*, those who perform works but have no wealth, that is, no share of forms of knowledge, gnoses or realities and have thus stood still unable to journey: these are the felicitous, the righteous whose return shall be to the garden of the acts; *and to the neighbour who is near*, the one who is at one of the stations of wayfaring that is near to your station; *and to the neighbour who is a stranger*, the one who at his station is distant from your station; *and to the friend at your side*, the companion who is at the very source of your station and accompanies you on your [spiritual] journey; *and to the wayfarer*, the one wayfaring on the path of the truth, who has entered into estrangement from the refuge of the soul, the one who has not arrived at any of the stations of the folk of God; *and to what your right hands own*, those who are under subject to your will and your love, who are your slaves, each according to what corresponds to him and is appropriate to him of the various types of kindness. If you wish you might interpret 'the near kindred' as that to which the person is conjoined of the disengaged things of the upper kingdom; and 'the orphans' as the spiritual faculties, as has been mentioned already; and 'the needy' as the ego-centric faculties such as the external senses and so on; 'the neighbour who is near' as the intellect; 'the neighbour who is a stranger' as estimation; 'the friend at your side' as yearning or desire; 'the wayfarer' as reflection; 'those owned by the right hand' as the acquired natural traits that are the sources of virtuous acts. *Surely God loves not the conceited*, who pursues the [spiritual] wayfaring with his soul and not with God, admiring his works [in conceit],

*and the boastful*, who is blissfully gladdened by his states, his stations and perfections, veiled by his inspection of these and by inspecting the fact that he has these attributes. [4:37] *Those who are niggardly*, at the first instance by withholding their perfections and forms of knowledge in the hideaways of their innate dispositions and the mattamores of their natural impulses, failing to manifest them by working with them at the [right] moment; then [they are niggardly] by failing to procure the rights of those to these are due and do not consecrate their attributes and essences to the annihilation in God because of their love for them; nor do they expend of the substance of their knowledge and character traits and perfections on the deserving, in the way mentioned; *and bid other people to be niggardly*, inducing them to states like theirs, *and conceal what God has bestowed upon them of His bounty*, in the way of the affirmation of the Oneness, gnoses, [virtuous] character traits and realities in the recesses of preparedness and the darkneses of faculty, as though non-existent. *And We have prepared for those that disbelieve*, those who are veiled from the Truth, *a humbling chastisement*, in the light of their disgraced countenances and disfigured attributes.

[4:38] *And those who expend of their substance to show off to people*, that is, who manifest their perfections from the concealment of non-existence and bring them out into actuality, veiled by their seeing these as being of their own souls and make a show to people that these [perfections] are theirs, *and believe not in God*, with true belief so that they might know that absolute perfection can only be His — what existence does anything other than Him possess so that such [perfection] might belong to it? — and that they might be rid of the veil of seeing perfection as that of their souls and might thus be delivered from the sin of vanity; *and the Last Day*, that is, the annihilation in God and the issuing forth before the One, the Vanquisher, that they might thus be quit of the sin of associating [others with God]. And that is because of their comradeship with the satan of estimation. *Whoever has Satan for a comrade, then an evil comrade has he*, because he [Satan] leads him astray from guidance and veils him from the Truth.

[4:39] *And what burden is on them if they were to believe in God*, that is, if they were to be true to God through affirmation of [His] Oneness and annihilation in Him and the effacement of the perfections which God has provided them by attributing them to God. *God is ever Aware of them*, recompensing them with subsistence after annihilation and [aware] of their possessing those attributes and perfections through God and not through their own souls.

[4:40] *Surely God shall not wrong*, that is, He does not diminish anything of those perfections with the annihilation in Him, *so much as the weight of an atom*, rather, He augments them by means of the reinforcement of [His Name] the Truth; *and if it be a*

*good deed, He will double it*, and it cannot be a good deed unless it is [done] for Him, *and He will give from Himself a great wage*, namely, what He has hidden for a person of what delights the eye, that is to say, the witnessing of the essence in which there is no veiledness from the differentiations of the attributes.

[4:41] *So how shall it be when We bring forward from every community a witness*, to the end [of the verse]: a witness (*shahīd*) or a sign (*shāhid*) is what is present to every person of the degree of gnosis which he has attained and that which prevails on him, thereby revealing his state, his work, his endeavour and the extent of his efforts, whether it be in terms of station or one of the attributes of the Truth, or essence. Thus for every community there is a witness commensurate with that to which their prophet called them and that which he has made known to them; he only calls them to that station of gnosis at which he has arrived. A prophet is always sent in accordance with the preparedness of his community. And so they know God by the light of their preparedness in the form of the perfection of their prophet. That is why it is mentioned in a *ḥadīth*, 'Indeed God discloses Himself in [a manner commensurate with] the form of their belief, such that members of all religious communities and schools know Him; but He then changes from that form and emerges in another form whereby the only ones who know Him are the affirmers of [His] Oneness, who enter into the Presence of the Exclusive Unity (*aḥadiyya*) from every gate. Just as every community has a witness, so every member of a legal school also has a witness who unveils the state of the object of the witnessing. As for the Muḥammadans, their witness is God, the beloved Who enjoys the descriptions of all attributes and that is because of the stature of the perfection of their Prophet, being the beloved [of God and of his community], the one who has been given the sum of all [excellent] speech, the completer of [virtuous] character traits. There is no doubt that they can know Him in all the forms of His transmutation if they follow their Prophet with a veritable following and are affirmers of His Exclusive Unity, beloved [to God] like their Prophet.

[4:42] *Upon that day, those who disbelieved*, by choosing to be veiled from the Truth, *those who disobeyed the Messenger*, by veiling themselves from religion, *will wish that the earth*, of preparedness, *might be levelled with them*, so that their souls might be obliterated or become innocent free of the engravings of corrupt creeds and ruinous base traits. *And they will not hide from God any talk*: they will not be able to suppress the words of those engravings in order to avoid being chastised by His punishment.

[4:43] *O you who believe*, with the faith of knowledge, for a believer by his entified faith cannot be forgetful in his prayers, *draw not near to prayer*, that is, do not draw near to the state of presence communion with God when in your state you are, *inebriated*, by the sleep of forgetfulness or by the wines of desires and the love of this world, *until you*

*know what you are saying*, in your communions and your hearts are not preoccupied with the distractions of this world and its insinuations lest you be distracted from Him, nor in a state where you are distant from the Truth by the intensity of [your] inclination to the soul and the pursuit of its pleasures, lusts or shares or finding comfort in these, *unless you are traversing a way*, [unless] you are passing through as you wayfare along one of the paths in which you give it enjoyment [of these things] in the measure that is necessary or beneficial, such as when passing through the path of nourishment by means of food and drink in order to fulfil a need, to preserve your strength and to garb yourselves against heat or cold, or to conceal your private parts, or to engage in sexual relations in order to sustain your lineage without being totally drawn to [any of] that simply on the basis of desire such that it is imprinted on you and cannot be removed or it becomes difficult [to do so], *until you have washed yourselves*, that is, [until] you have cleansed yourselves of that configuration resulting from your attraction to the lower aspect with the water of repentance and the asking of forgiveness and [from] the springs of apology and absolution. *But if you are sick*, in heart, having lost its soundness because of the sicknesses that are the corrupt beliefs and the ruinous vile traits, *or on a journey*, in the wilderness of ignorance and perplexity in pursuit of the pleasures of the soul and abominable matter through covetousness; *or if any of you comes from*, having been ensconced in the soil of property and the acquisition of transient things, polluted by the configuration of the object of his love and his inclinations, with that configuration deeply embedded in him; *or you have touched women*, [or] you have adhered to the soul and have embraced it and its [sources of] pleasure and lust; *and you can find no water*, [no] knowledge to guide you to ridding yourselves of it and to set you right by purging yourselves of it, *then resort to wholesome soil*, then orient yourselves towards the wholesome soil of your preparedness, seek it and then return to the original preparedness of primordial nature, *and wipe*, with its light, *your faces and your hands*, that is, your existing essences and attributes, by alighting [at the stations along the journey] and effacing the configurations that attach you to these and cause you to dispose of them, for that soil effaces their vestiges and leaves them pure as they once were. *God is ever Pardoning*, of these dark configurations and the embedding of those veiling traits when you abandon them and refrain from them, eliminating them totally so that your preparedness becomes pure and you are prepared for His encounter and the communion with Him, *Forgiving*, covering your attributes and your essences with His attributes and His essence.

[4:44] *Have you not seen those who were given a share of the Book*, that is, some part [of It], which is their admission of the truth despite their being veiled from religion, *purchasing error*, choosing to be veiled from religion, which is the path of the truth, in

exchange for the guiding light of their preparedness and desiring that you should do the same. They are your enemy and God has knowledge of their enmity for you, then [4:45] *God suffices as a Protector*, protecting your affair by granting your success in finding the path of the affirmation of His Oneness and [He suffices] as a Helper to help you against your enemies by repressing them.

[4:47] *O you who have been given the Book*, the Book of preparedness, *believe*, a true belief of eyewitness by bringing out what is in the Book of your preparedness [from potentiality] to actuality by the affirmation of the oneness of the Essence, *before We obliterate faces*, by the removal and effacement of their preparednesses, *and turn them on their backs*, which is the lowest of the low in the world of bodies which is posterior to every [other] world, *or We curse them*, We chastise them by transforming [them] as We transformed, *those of the Sabbath, and God's command is done*, that is, fulfilled for all eternity, none able to change it or revoke it.

[4:48] *God forgives not that anything should be associated with Him*: an allusion to the fact that wretchedness of knowledge and creed is everlasting and can never be reached without that [wretchedness] of deeds, in other words, He does not shelter with His existence or allow to be annihilated in His essence the one who affirms the existence of any other than Him. How could it be otherwise, when He afflicts him repeatedly in his existence?

[4:49] *Have you not seen those who praise themselves for purity?*, that is, [those] who remove the attributes of their souls through their own souls, which is not possible, just as it is not possible for one of us to bear [the burden of] his soul, since these [attributes] are concomitants of the soul, subsisting and adhering to it, which is why God, exalted be He, says *And whoever is saved from the avarice of his own soul* [Q. 59:9], since the vile traits are kneaded into it, subsisting [in it] as long as it subsists. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him: 'The worst of people is the one who is still alive when the resurrection takes place'; that is, he has stopped at the knowledge of the Oneness but his soul has not found death in annihilation so that it might then find life in God. Such a person in that case is a heretic who permits violation of the law in all things (*ibāḥa*). *Nay, God purifies whom He will*, effacing his attributes by eliminating them with His attributes, exalted be He; *and they shall not be wronged, a single date-thread*, in other words, they shall not have even the smallest thing of their attributes and what is due to these [attributes] diminished. For God does not take anything from them, despite their feebleness and the speed with which they are extinguished, until He gives the equivalent in return from His attributes, despite their power and everlastingness.



[4:50] *Consider how they invent falsehood against God*, by claiming to purify their souls of their attributes when they have not been purified, or, because of the existence of their souls, by falsely ascribing God's attributes to their own souls.

[4:51] *Have you not seen*, to the end [of the verse where it says]: *they believe in al-Jibt and al-Ṭāghūt*, by their affirmation of the existence of other [than God], and that is the way in which they lead [others] astray from religion, which is the path of the affirmation of [His] Oneness, *and say*, to those who have been veiled from the Truth, *'These are more rightly guided*, than the affirmers of the Oneness, *in their way'*?, since they are like them in associating [others with God], in contrast to the believers who are opposed to them in both way and goal. For when those who affirm the Oneness go astray in their way, they do not arrive at the goal which they affirmed. They are thus guilty of a subtle association (*shirk*) that approximates the state of those who are veiled from the Truth, those who have committed a manifest association, and thus they correspond to them and are directed towards them, claiming to be the most rightly-guided of the affirmers of Oneness, as we see is the case with certain exoterics [today] who belong to the Muslim community.<sup>62</sup>

[4:52] *Those are the ones whom God has cursed*, by transfiguring [their] preparedness: the one whom God banishes, none can help him through guidance or bringing [him] near or deliverance.

[4:56] *Surely those who disbelieve in Our signs*, that is, [those] who have been veiled from the self-disclosures of Our attributes and acts, since the point of departure of the verse is His being self-disclosed through knowledge and wisdom in the family of Abraham — *We shall expose them*, to the fire of the yearning for perfection since this is what is entailed in their natural impulses and traits in accordance with their preparedness in addition to the deep-rootedness of the veil and its adherence [to them]; or [We shall expose them] to the fire of vanquishing through the self-disclosures of the attributes of His vanquishing power, [a fire] that corresponds to their states; or to the fire of the evilness of their souls and the vehemence of their yearning and pursuit of the perfections of their attributes and their lusts which have been provoked in them but of which they are deprived; *as often as their skins are consumed*, [as often as] their corporeal veils are removed [from them] when they abandon them, *We shall replace them*, with new veils other than those, *that they may taste the chastisement*, the fires of privation. *Surely God is ever Mighty*, powerful. He vanquishes them and disgraces them by abasing the attributes of their souls and He burns them with the fires of their longing for their perfections by depriving them [of these] forever; *Wise*, requiring them

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<sup>62</sup> Note on *zābiriyyūn* and *islāmiyyūn*.

with the chastisement which is appropriate to them and which they have chosen for their souls by their irascible and concupiscent exigencies and other [such motivations] and their inclination to corporeal pleasures; that is why veils of darkness are successively replaced for them.

[4:57] *And those that believe*, by affirming the unity of [God's] attributes, *and perform*, what makes them righteous by virtue of [their] acceptance of the self-disclosures of these [attributes], *We shall admit them to the Gardens*, of those who have assumed these attributes and the stations thereof, *underneath which rivers flow*, that is, the rivers of the knowledge deriving from the self-disclosures of these [attributes] in the way of the knowledge of the heart. Here the [purified] spouses are the sanctified spirits which are the loci of the manifestations of the divine attributes that are purified through the corporeal configurations; *and We shall admit them to plenteous shade*, that is, [to] the shade of the divine attributes whose spirit lasts forever by the effacement of the human attributes.

[4:58] *Verily, God commands you to restore trusts back to their owners*, that is, [to give] what is due to the person to whom it is due by fulfilling what is due of preparedness first, then by fulfilling what is due to all of the faculties in terms of the perfections which they entail, then by fulfilling what is due to God, exalted be He, in terms of restoring to Him the attributes, then by restoring [to Him] existence, so that you are then annihilated in the Oneness and so that when you return to subsistence after annihilation and judge between people, you will do things with God in mind, upholding justice, possessing the attributes of God's justice such that no injustice can issue from you. The least degree of justness is to effaced in terms of one's own attributes, since the one who does things of his own soul can never be just. *God is ever Hearer*, of the statements you make in arbitrations between people, and whether these are truth-inspired and sound or soul-inspired and corrupt; *Seer*, of your deeds and whether they issue from the attributes of your souls or from the attributes of the Truth.

[4:59] *O you who believe*, by [your] affirmation of the unity of [His] attributes, *obey God*, by affirming the unity of the essence and by being annihilated in the union, *and obey the Messenger*, by observing what is due at the level of differentiation at the source of the union and taking note of the hierarchy of the attributes after being annihilated in the essence, *and those in authority among you*, of those who deserve spiritual guardianship (*walāya*) and leadership [over you], as has already been mentioned in the story of Saul.

[4:60] *Have you not seen*, that is, have you not marvelled at, *those who claim that they believe in what has been revealed to you*, of the knowledge of the affirmation of the Oneness, *and what was revealed before you*, of the knowledge of the point of origin and

the final return, *desiring to take their disputes to a false deity*, when it is incompatible with their claim. For if their faith was sound, they would not have affirmed an other [in the first place] for that [other] to then have any power to arbitrate. Indeed they, by virtue of true belief, are obliged to disbelieve in any other than Him. The one who has not been stripped of his attributes and acts and whose essence has not been obliterated in God, exalted be He, constitutes some other [than God]; and the one who orients himself towards some other has verily obeyed Satan. But Satan only desires that they be led far astray, which is to deviate from the truth through association [of others with God], since to incline away from religion is to be in clear error.

[4:64] *We never sent any Messenger, but that he should be obeyed by the leave of God*, [to the end of] the verse: the difference between a messenger and a prophet is that messengership entails the communication of laws, [as in] *O Messenger, communicate [what has been revealed to you]* [Q. 5:67]. As for prophethood, this is to inform of spiritual knowledge and realities that have to do with the differentiated aspects of [God's] attributes and acts. Prophethood is the exoteric aspect of spiritual sanctity (*walāya*), which is to be absorbed in the source of the union and the annihilation in the essence. The knowledge of these two is the knowledge of the affirmation of the unity of the essence and the effacement of the acts and attributes. Thus every messenger is a prophet and every prophet is a spiritual guardian (*walī*), but not every spiritual guardian is a prophet, nor is every prophet a messenger, even if the rank of spiritual guardianship is nobler than prophethood and prophethood [nobler] than messengership, as it is said: 'The station of prophethood is in an interstice (*barzakh*) slightly below that of the spiritual guardian and just above that of the messenger'.

Thus a messenger is only sent to be obeyed, since his law is the law of God by virtue of the communication [inherent therein]. He must therefore be obeyed, but is only obeyed by His permission, for the one who is veiled from him by a shortcoming in his preparedness, such as the primordial disbeliever and the true wretched one, or [veiled from him] by the rusting [of the heart] and the effacement of preparedness, such as the hypocrite is in reality not permitted to be obedient.

*If, when they had wronged their souls*, by preventing these from what is due to them, namely, their [unrealised] perfections that are fixed in them in potentiality, and by sullyng their preparedness by orienting themselves towards the pursuit of sensory pleasures and transient goals, *they had come to you*, out of [their own] volition as entailed by their preparedness, *and asked forgiveness from God*, [and] asked God to conceal the attributes of their souls, which are the sources of those acts that veil what is in their preparedness by the light of His attributes, *and the Messenger had asked forgiveness for them*, by reinforcing them from the light of his attributes, which are the

attributes of God, Might and Majestic, because of the interconnection that they have with him through genus and the place of will and love required by their nearness to him and their being admixed with him, *they would have found God Relenting*, cleansing and purifying of their preparedness with His light, for [His] acceptance of [their] repentance is the casting of the light of [His] attributes on them and the illumination of their inner aspects with the luminous configuration that protects them from erring in acts, given the remoteness of light from darkness, *Merciful*, effusing upon them the mercy of perfection that befits them in the way of certainty that comes through knowledge or entific existence or the Truth.

[4:65] *But no, by your Lord! They will not believe*, with the true faith of the affirmation of the Oneness, *until they make you judge*, by virtue of your judgement being God's judgement, but the essence has been veiled by the attributes and the attributes by the acts. Thus when they fall into dispute they have stood by their attributes veiled from the attributes of the Truth, or by their acts veiled from the acts of the Truth and are not in reality believers. When they make you judge, however, they will have been stripped of their acts and if they do not find in their souls any inhibition regarding what you decide, they will have been stripped of their will and attained the station of satisfaction, and [stripped] of their knowledge and power and attained the station of submission whereafter their attributes will no longer constitute a veil and they will have acquired the attributes of the Truth who is unveiled to them in the form of the attributes and they will know that you are Him, subsisting in Him and not in your own self, in reality being just through His justness and so their belief in God will have been realised.

[4:66] *And had We prescribed*, that is, [had] We made it obligatory, *for them: 'Slay your souls'*, by curbing the caprice that is their [the souls' source of] life and by annihilating their attributes, *or 'Leave your habitations'*, your stations, which are patience, trust, satisfaction and the like, because of their veiling [of the soul] from the affirmation of Oneness, as al-Ḥusayn b. Manṣūr [al-Ḥallāj],<sup>63</sup> may God sanctify his spirit, said to Ibrāhīm b. Adham, may God have mercy on him, when he asked him about his state

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<sup>63</sup> Al-Ḥallāj was a Persian born Iraqi 10<sup>th</sup> century Sufi executed by the authorities in 309/922, apparently for the controversy caused by some of his ecstatic, or theopathic, statements (*shataḥāt*) — famously, 'I am the Truth (*ana'l-Ḥaqq*)'; but his execution was most likely for political reasons centred around the intrigues of the viziers at the Abbasid court and the rivalry between the various dominant Sunni schools in Baghdad; see L. Massignon [L. Gardet], 'al-Ḥallāj', *EI2*, III, 99; Louis Massignon, *Hallāj: mystic and martyr*, tr. Herbert Mason, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1982; Abū 'Abd al-Raḥmān al-Sulamī, *Ṭabaqāt al-Ṣūfiyya*, ed. Muṣṭafā 'Abd al-Qādir 'Aṭā. Beirut: Dār al-Kutub al-'Ilmiyya, 1998, 236. As for Ibrāhīm b. Adham (*q.v.* Russell Jones, *EI2*, III, 985), the most reliable death date is given as 161/777-8, and could not have actually met al-Ḥallāj (born 244/857).

and [al-Hallāj] responded by saying, ‘I wander the deserts and roam the open lands where there is neither water nor trees, and neither meadows nor rain: am I right in assuming a state of trust [in God] or not?’, to which he [Ibrāhīm] replied, ‘If you were to spend your entire life cultivating your belly: where [in all of that] is the annihilation in the Oneness?’; *they would not have done it, save a few of them*: and these [few] are the lovers [of God], those prepared for His encounter, the greatest in power, the smallest in number, as God says *but few are they* [Q. 38:24]; *it would have been better for them*, in terms of the perfection that would have been actualised for them upon the removal of the veil of the attributes of the soul by the assumption of the attributes of the Truth or by the arrival at the source of the union, *and stronger in establishing*, by making [them] upright in religion upon subsistence after the annihilation.

[4:67] *And then, We would have surely given them from Us a great wage*, in the way of self-disclosures of the attributes upon the slaying of the soul.

[4:68] *And We would have guided them to a straight path*, upon their departure from their homes, that is, [from] the waystations of the soul and the stations, which is the path of the Oneness and [the path of] uprightness in the affirmation of the Oneness.

[4:69] *Whoever obeys God*, by wayfaring in the paths of the affirmation of the Oneness and the union, *and the Messenger*, by being mindful of the differentiations, *they are with those whom God has blessed*, with guidance, *from among the prophets and the truthful*, who have been truthful in ascribing attributes and acts to God by repudiating their attributes and assuming His attributes; were they to manifest themselves with the attributes of their own souls, they would have been untruthful, *and the martyrs*, that is, the folk of the presence, *and the righteous*, namely, those who are upright in religion.

[4:70] *That bounty*, in other words, [that] facilitation granted for the actualisation of perfection by which they have acquired a correspondence to prophets and those with them, thus becoming their companions [*is from God*]; [*God suffices*] *as Knower*, knowing the potential in their preparedness for perfection and thus makes it manifest upon them.

[4:71] [*O you who believe*] *take your precautions*, that against which you exercise caution, such as Satan’s casting [of his insinuations] and his evil whisperings and his leading of you to perdition by means of [his] deception, and [such things as] the manifestation of the attributes of your souls and their acquisition of mastery over you, for these are the most hostile of all your enemies; *then move forward in companies*, wayfare in the path of God in groups, each party [following] the spiritual path of a perfect, knowledgeable shaykh, *or move forward all together*, along the path of the affirmation of Oneness and that of submission (*islām*) following closely [the path of] the Prophet.

[4:78] *And if a good thing befalls them, they say, 'This is from God',* to the end [of the verse]: proving that they are Qadarites,<sup>64</sup> since they ascribe good to God and evil to man, imitating Magians in affirming independent efficient causes in existence and ascribing evil to the Messenger but not to themselves, since he was the one who sent them forth [to battle] and who incited them to [suffer] the evil that they encounter because of him. Thus the Messenger is commanded to call them to the belief in the unity of acts and the denial of efficient cause on the part of others and to the affirmation that He is the agent of good and evil by His words *Say, 'Everything is from God'. What is wrong with this people that they do not understand?*, because of their being veiled by the attributes of [their] souls and [by] the failure of the hearing of their hearts which are the vessels for audition and understanding. Then it is made clear that God is bounteous and just by the fact that good things and perfections are all out of His bounty, and that evil things are from His justness. In other words, He decrees them for us and afflicts us with them because of a preparedness and a meriting [of that] in us that requires it be so. That meriting occurs by the soul's manifesting of itself in its attributes and its commission of acts of disobedience and sins that necessitate punishment and not because of any other act, as when they attributed the evil that befell them to the Messenger. For the meriting [of such evil] is dependent on the preparedness [of that individual], such that what is entailed by the preparedness of one person does not interfere with another, just as God says *And no burdened soul shall bear the burden of another [burdened soul]* [Q. 6:164]. Thus He has shown them to be liars in their ascription to ... by proving that the efficient cause for [both] good and evil is none other than God alone as required by His bounty and justice. As for the receptive cause, even if in reality that is also from Him, the receptivity for good relates to the original preparedness [of an individual], that derives from the holiest effusion on which our acts and choices have no bearing. Receptivity of evil derives from the preparedness temporally created by the soul's manifesting itself in its attributes and acts, which veil the heart and tarnish its substance such that it needs to be polished by means of

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<sup>64</sup> *Qadar*, properly referred to God's decree but came to refer to those who upheld the idea of human free will. This popular theological movement emerged among the students of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī (d. 728), himself said to have composed an epistle defending the concept of human free will to the caliph 'Abd al-Malik b. Marwān (d. 705). The Qadarites are thought to prefigure the later rationalist Mu'tazili movement who justified human freedom in the context of God's justice and the Qur'ānic scheme of reward and punishment (sc. if humans are not free it would not be fair of God to reward them for good deeds and punish them for evil ones); see Michael A. Cook, *Early Muslim Dogma*, Cambridge: CUP, 1981, 117ff; Josef van Ess, *Theologie und Gesellschaft*, I, 72-135, II, 50ff.; *id.*, 'Qadariyya', *EI2*, IV, 368-72.

calamities, afflictions, trials and misfortunes, and does not derive from the part of the Messenger or anyone else.

[4:97] *And those whom the angels receive [in death]*, to the end [of the verse]: *al-tawaffi* is to receive fully the spirit (*istifā*) from the body by having it seized from it, which can be in one of three ways: the reception of [it by] the angels, the reception of [it by] the angel of death, and the reception of [it by] God. As for the angels' reception [of the spirit], that is for the folk of the souls who are either fortunate, being the good folk, those of the praiseworthy attributes and virtuous character traits from among the righteous, *the Godfearing, those whom the angels receive [in death] while they are goodly, saying to them, 'Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise because of what you used to do'* [Q. 16:31-32]: their final return shall be to the garden of the acts. Or they are the damned, the evil folk, those of the base attributes and the wicked character traits, whose spirits are only received by the powers of the angelic realm which in this world are the equivalent of their faculties which constitute their station, veiled as they are by attributes of the soul and the pleasures of the imaginative, estimative, predatorial and bestial faculties, *the disbelievers, those whom the angels receive [in death] while they are wronging themselves* [Q. 16:27-28]: their final return shall be to the Fire. As for the reception of the angel of death, that is for the possessors of hearts, those who have emerged from the veil of the soul to the station of the heart and have returned to the primordial nature and have become illumined by it. The spirits of these [latter] are seized by the universal rational soul, which is the heart of the world, because of their conjunction with it; this is the case if it is the angel of death himself who seizes their spirits. If he seizes [these spirits] by means of his assistants and their powers, then they belong to the first group [mentioned above]. He [the angel of death] may seize them himself and turn them over to the angelic realm of chastisement so that they might be brought to reckoning and requited in accordance with their vices and be rid [of them]; that will be on account of [their] perfection or deficiency of knowledge, as in the case of the one who is delivered from ignorance and associating [others with God] and becomes adorned with knowledge and the affirmation of Oneness, but upon whose heart there had accumulated dark configurations and base natures because of wicked deeds and reprehensible character traits; or on account of having knowledge of the affirmation of the Oneness but ignorance of the final return, as in the case of the affirmer of the Oneness who denies the [final] recompense and is ensconced in acts of disobedience, as God, exalted be He, says *Say: the angel of death, who has been charged with you, shall receive you [in death]* [Q. 32:11]. As for the reception of [spirits in death by] God, that is for the affirmers of [His] Oneness who have ascended from the station of the heart to the locus of presential vision (*shubūd*) and so there remains no veil between them and their

Lord. Thus He takes charge of the seizure of their spirits Himself and gathers them unto Himself *the day on which We shall gather the God-fearing to the Compassionate One, as honoured delegations on mounts* [Q. 19:85], and as He says *God receives the souls at the time of their death* [Q. 39:42]; *while they are wronging their souls*, by preventing them from what is due to them by virtue of their preparednesses in terms of the perfections deposited within them; [*the angels will say*] ‘*What was your predicament?*’, when you fell short of the effort required to [attain] what was decreed [for you] and neglected your duty to God [cf. Q. 39:56], and fell short of attaining the perfection that had been prepared for you and to which you were enjoined. *They will say, ‘We were oppressed*, in the land of the preparedness to which we had become innately disposed by the mastery [over us] of the faculties of the commanding soul and the overwhelming power of caprice through the satanic nature of estimation: these have held us captive in their shackles, compelled us to [follow] their religion and coerced us to [adopt] their disbelief. *They [the angels] will reply, ‘But was not God’s earth spacious*: was not the capacity of your preparedness such that you might have emigrated a few steps within it from the original point of your primordial nature in such a way that when some of the veils are removed from you, you would be able to depart from the captivity of the faculties and to be rid of the fetters of caprice and would have drawn strength from the reinforcement of your helpers, the spiritual faculties, and you would have been assisted to victory by the lights of the heart and thus left the town, whose people were evildoers [cf. Q. 4:75], and which is the city (*madīna*) of the soul, to the goodly land of the heart whereafter the mercy of your Forgiving Lord would have reached you; *that you might have emigrated therein?*’ *As for such, their abode shall be Hell*, [their abode shall be] their souls yearning intensely yet deprived — *an evil journey’s end!*

[4:98] *Except the oppressed among the men*, that is, those of strong preparedness, those whose concupiscent and irascible faculties have been strengthened while their preparedness has also been strong but who have not been able to curb these by wayfaring along the path of truth; nor have they turned to their estimative and imaginative faculties and invalidated their preparednesses with corrupt beliefs. They have thus remained captive in their corporeal faculties, their preparedness illuminated by the light of knowledge but unable to remove their fetters in order to wayfare; *women*, those whose preparedness falls short of the level of perfection of knowledge and wayfaring along the path of realisation, those of weak faculties and the simple-minded regarding whom it was said, ‘The majority of the inhabitants of Paradise shall be those simple souls’; *and children*, that is, the deficient who fall short of attaining the degree of perfection because of a jealousy (*ghayra*) on the part of the attributes of the soul that affects them; *who are unable to devise a plan*, because of their inability and incapacity to



break the attributes of the soul or curb caprice through spiritual discipline, *and are not guided to a way*, because they do not know how to wayfare and because of their being deprived of the light of the guidance of the religious law.

[4:99] *As for such, perhaps God will pardon them*, by effacing these dark configurations because these have not taken deep roots [in their souls] and because of the soundness of their beliefs, *for God is ever Pardoning*, of sins as long as the primordial nature has not changed, *Forgiving*, covering up the attributes of their souls with the light of His attributes.

[4:100] *Whoever emigrates*, from the habituated resting places of the soul in the way of the Truth through resolve, *will find*, in the earth of his preparedness many refuges, abodes and waystations therein, in spite of the estimative, imaginative, bestial and predatorial faculties of his soul and their degradation [of one's preparedness], *and abundance*, expansion in the breast upon deliverance from the constriction of the attributes of the soul and the fetters of caprice; *and whoever goes forth*, from the station at which he is, whether it be the resting-place of his preparedness to which he has become naturally disposed or one of the waystations of the soul or one of the stations of the heart, *as an emigrant to God*, by orienting himself towards the affirmation of the unity of the Essence, *and His Messenger*, by orienting himself towards the pursuit of uprightness in affirming the unity of the attributes, *and is then overtaken*, by being severed [from the way] before arriving, *his wage is then incumbent upon God*, in accordance with the object of his orientation. For the one oriented towards wayfaring shall have the wage of the waystation at which he has arrived, that is, a level of the perfection that has been actualised in his case, if it should be so, and the wage of the station on which he has set his sights and to which he aspires. That perfection, even if it should not be actualised for him on account of possession and eternity, is yearned for by him by virtue of his seeking of it and having it in his sights. Perhaps he will be supported by the [divine] gift of assistance, after the removal of the veils, to arrive thereat; *surely God is ever Forgiving*, forgiving him those things which prevent him from attaining what he seeks, *Merciful*, to him by bestowing on him the perfection to which he was oriented and on which his sights were set.

[4:101] And when you are journeying in the land of preparedness along the path of knowledge in pursuit of certainty, *you would not be at fault if you shorten*, that is, [if] you curtail the corporeal deeds and the fulfilment of the duties of servanthood (*'ubūdiyya*) such as gratitude and presence, for the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said, 'Whoever has been given his [full] share of certainty, let him not be [overly] concerned with what he has missed of prayers and fasting', *if you fear that you may be afflicted*, that you may be deceived and led astray, *by those who do not believe*, that is,

[by] those that have been veiled such as the faculties of estimation and imagination and the human devils who are astray and who lead [others] astray, given what we know from the words of the Prophet, 'A single man of [deep] understanding is more difficult for Satan [to lead astray] than a thousand worshippers'.

[4:105] *Surely We have revealed to you the Book*, that is, the knowledge of the differentiations of the attributes and the rules governing their self-disclosures, with the truth, appavelled in justice and sincerity, or [it means] upheld by the Truth and not by your soul, so that you might judge between creatures, *by that which God has shown you*, of His justice. *And do not be, for traitors*, those who do not restore to God the trust which He has deposited in them since pre-eternity by virtue of the possibility embedded in their preparedness of knowing Him perfectly, but who have betrayed their souls and [those of] others by pillaging what is their due and expending it in inappropriate ways, *a disputant*, who wards off [their] chastisement for them and the fact that God has given power to [other] creatures over them to hurt them, [or a disputant] who remonstrates in defence of them against others or against God by objecting that he has put right their [state of] having been forsaken and vanquished [by God]. For verily they are the evildoers. They have no argument [against God], rather the [burden of] proof is against them.

[4:106] *And pray for forgiveness from God*, for your soul by refraining from objecting and remonstrating on their behalf so that We might forgive you your variegation, which has manifested itself on you by the presence of your heart and its attributes.

[4:107] *And do not dispute*: the interpretation of this has become clear from this [preceding statement].

[4:108] *They hide themselves from people*, by concealing from them their vices and the attributes of their souls, which are the sources of their shame; *but they do not hide themselves from God*, by eliminating them and eradicating them, even though He is the witness over them, knowing their inner selves, *while they contrive*, [while] they lend weight to, in the world of the darkened soul and nature, *what is displeasing to Him of suppositions*, in the way of illusions and corrupt machinations which they string together in order to actualise what they desire of the transient things of this world and its pleasures. *God is ever Encompassing of what they do*, recompensing them in accordance with their attributes and their deeds.

[4:109] *Ab! There you are*: [the interpretation of this is] clear from what has already been mentioned.

[4:110] *Whoever does evil*, by the manifestation of one of the attributes of his soul, *or wrongs his soul*, by diminishing something of his [potential] perfections, [perfections] entailed in his preparedness by falling short [of something] therein or by committing a

deed that is incompatible with it, [but] then asks God to cover up that attribute or configuration that is concealing his perfection by orienting himself towards Him and renouncing sinful behaviour, *he shall find God is Forgiving*, covering up that evil deed and dark configuration with the light of His attribute, *Merciful*, bestowing [on that person] what his preparedness entails.

[4:112] *And whoever commits a mistake*, by manifesting his soul, *or a sin*, by effacing what is in his preparedness or by acquiring a configuration that is incompatible with [the realisation of] his perfection, *and then casts it upon an innocent one*, by saying [something like], ‘So and so drove me to do it, or so and so prevented me from seeking the truth, or this is the crime of so and so’, as is the habit of those who are given to brandishing excuses, *he has thereby burdened himself with calumny*, by [falsely] attributing his own [mis]deed to another. For had there not been a proclivity in his soul towards what is opposed to his perfection and a correspondence to those who agree with him and obey him [in that], it would not be accepted from him. So it is only of the doing of his own soul, as Satan says to them, *Truly God promised you a promise of truth, whereas I promised you then failed you, for over you I had no warrant except that I called you and you responded to me. So do not blame me, but blame your own souls* [Q. 14:22]. For if there had not been a darkness in their souls which they had acquired and which resulted from the manifesting of their attributes, there would not have been in them a locus for his [Satan’s] evil whisperings or a receptivity for his call; *and a manifest sin*, one that is manifest and multiplying, composed as it is of the configuration of the mistake and their refusal to confess [their sin] and to ascribe the shortcoming to their own souls so that it might be broken and become too weak to hold sway over the heart or to prevent it from perfection.

[4:113] *Were it not for God’s bounty to you*, that is, His granting [you] of success and His reinforcement [of you] for the wayfaring along His path with what brings out your perfection [from potentiality] into actuality and accentuates the knowledge that is latent within you; *and His mercy*, His gift [to you] of that absolute perfection which He has deposited in you from pre-eternity, that mercy beyond which there is no [greater] mercy; *but they lead only their souls astray*, since that errancy the product of their original preparedness, moulded as they are upon wretchedness from pre-eternity: how then can that errancy that has been kneaded into them affect anyone other than them? *God has revealed to you the Book*, that is, the complete differentiated knowledge after the existence bestowed [on you from Him], *and wisdom*, knowledge of the rules governing the differentiations and the self-disclosures of the attributes and how to implement this [wisdom], *and He has taught you what you did not know*, since it is God’s knowledge, which only He possesses, and so when He revealed to you His

Essence upon your annihilation in Him, then made you subsist through the existence derived from [His Name] the Truth and your heart came to be and He veiled you with the veil of that heart, He taught you of His knowledge, as the attribute is consequent to the essence, *and God's bounty*, in manifesting that perfection upon you by facilitating for you the performing of deeds that have helped you arrive at where you have arrived, *is ever great*.

[4:114] *There is no good in much of their secret conversations*, for that is idle curiosity and a wayfarer must refrain from idle curiosity, as the Prophet said, 'A sign of the virtuousness of a person's submission (*islām*) is that he refrains from what does not concern him'; *except for he who enjoins*, that is, except for the secret conversation of one who enjoins, *to voluntary almsgiving*, that is, to a virtue such as generosity, which is a kind of [virtuous] abstinence, *or a kindness*, that is verbal, such as the imparting of knowledge or a wisdom, given the virtuousness of wisdom, or [a kindness] that is practical, such as the succour of one in distress or assisting a victim of injustice, which is an act of valour, *or setting things right between people*, out of a sense of justice. *And whoever does that*, namely, [whoever] brings together all of these mentioned perfections, *desiring God's good pleasure*, not seeking praise or to make a show to people or to seek a reputation such that the virtue in his case becomes a vice, *We shall surely give him a great wage*, of the gardens of the attributes.

[4:117] *What they pray to instead of Him are but females*, that is, [these are but] souls, since anyone who associates others with God is a worshipper of his own soul by his obedience of its caprice and a worshipper of the Satan of estimation by accepting its misguidance and obeying it; or [females means] all that is worshipped besides God, since that [object of worship] is a contingent being and every contingent thing succumbs to the effect of another and is liable to its effects, in need of it, which is an attribute of females.

[4:118] *[And he [Satan] said, 'Assuredly I will take to myself] an appointed portion*, that is, other than those who shall be saved because they have been sincere in their religion by their affirmation of the Oneness.

[4:119] *and surely I will command them*, to [engage in] corrupt habits and ruinous caprices and grotesque acts that are opposed to reason and to revelation.

[4:122] *But those who believe*, with [that] true faith, the affirmation of the Oneness, since they are the antitheses of those who associate [others with God], *and perform*, what sets them on the right path to arriving at the union, or what sets people right all together by making them upright before God and in God after the annihilation and the actualisation of subsistence, *We shall admit them*, to the three mentioned gardens.

[4:123] *It*, the actualisation of what is promised, *is not according to your desires nor the desires of the People of the Scripture*, that is, [it is not by] your subsisting in your souls, their attributes and acts, for your will is merely wishful desire, and wishful desire is to ask for what habitually is not forthcoming.

[4:125] *And who is fairer in religion*, that is, in terms of path, *than he who submits his purpose*, namely, his existence, *to God*, and purges his essence of the blemishes of egoism and dualism by pure annihilation, *and is virtuous*, witness of the union at the source of differentiation, mindful of what is due from the self-disclosures of the attributes and the rules governing them, wayfaring along the path of virtuousness by being upright in his deeds, *and who follows the creed of Abraham*, in terms of the affirmation of [God's] Oneness, *as a ḥanīf*, inclining away from every act of association in his essence, his attributes and his acts and from every false religion, that is, [from] every path that leads to the affirmation of [the reality of] an act, or attribute or essence, of one other than Him, for his [Abraham's] religion is the religion of truth, by which I mean, that his [a person's spiritual] journeying will in that case be a journeying towards God, not a journeying in God by wayfaring along the path of the attributes, nor [a journeying] towards God by severing the attributes of the soul and the founts of the attributes of the heart. Thus there is no religion better than his [Abraham's] religion. *And God took Abraham for an intimate friend (khalīl)*, in other words, He treats him as an intimate (*khālala*), that is, He pervades the fissures of his essence and his attributes in such a way that He leaves no remnants thereof, or He seals the fissures and stands in place of what has been annihilated of him when he has been perfected and is in need of Him. The 'intimate' (*khalīl*) may be a higher level than the 'elect' (*ṣafī*) but it is lower than the 'lover' (*ḥabīb*), because the intimate is a lover in whom it may be estimated that there is a remnant of an otherness (*ghayriyya*), whereas the lover is a beloved in whom no such thing can be conceived of, which is why he [the lover] is cast into the fire of [divine] love and not the other.

[4:134] *Whoever desires the reward of this world*, satisfied to remain with the caprice of the soul: why does such a one seek the vilest of things and remain at the lowest levels? *then God has the reward*, of both abodes at once, if he should desire it [the reward of this world] by being annihilated in it, for He is the Existence that encompasses everything and nothing escapes Him. *God is ever Hearer*, of the conversations of your souls, *Seer*, of what your intentions and desires are in your deeds.

[4:135] *O you who believe*, with the affirmation of the Oneness through knowledge and by the desire for the reward of both abodes, *be*, firmly established at the station of justness, which is the noblest of virtues, *upright*, in fulfilling its duties such that it becomes a deeply-rooted trait in you alongside which no injustice or tyranny can issue

from you in any matter nor the manifestation of a soul-attribute as a result of the pursuit of some whim in order to draw some worldly profit or to ward off some harm. [4:136] *O you who believe*, with a traditional faith, *believe*, with the faith of realisation, or believe with the faith of knowledge, or believe with individual faith.

[4:137] *Verily, those who believed, and then disbelieved*, to the end [of the verse]: in other words, those who were perplexed and wavered between the two aspects of the upper lordship [of God] and the lower one [of themselves] by the intensity of their hypocrisy, with at times the victory of the light of the primordial nature and at others the mastery of the darkness of the soul and caprice. That is because both states were equal in them until [finally] the darkened configurations were able to establish themselves [in their souls], veils multiplied, corrupt beliefs and stagnant disposition took deep root as a result of the sway and absolute mastery that the attributes of the soul acquired [over them], such that they rusted over their hearts; *it was not for God to forgive them*, because of the veiling rust, the corruption of the heart's substance and the disappearance of preparedness, *nor to guide them to a way*, to truth, to perfection, or to the original primordial nature because of their non-receptivity to guidance and their chastisement is described as painful because of the status of their preparedness at the point of origin.

[4:139] *Those who take disbelievers for friends*, by virtue of their correspondence to them in terms of being veiled, *instead of believers*, because of the lack of [their] generic compatibility [with believers] — *do they desire*, to assume power through them in this world and to draw strength from their assets and their status? There is no possibility of that. Moreover they are mistaken, because power altogether is one of God's attributes, exalted be He, unassailable is He in His powers and might. His is the power to vanquish and to overwhelm all. Therefore power is actualised [for a person] in the measure that one is near to Him, receptive of His light and strength, and possessive of His attributes. So the people of faith are more deserving of this [power], while the people of the veil and disbelief are more deserving of making errors.

[4:142] [*When they stand up to pray*] *they stand up lazily*, because the lack of yearning on their part for the presence and their aversion towards it which is due to the darkness of their preparedness that is the result of the mastery [over them] of caprice.

[4:144] [*O you who believe*] *take not the disbelievers as friends*, lest their disbelief and their veiledness infect them through [their] companionship and mixing with them. For there nothing influences more than companionship. Moreover, the tendency towards friendship of them cannot [ultimately] be free of a generic compatibility between [the disbelievers and] them, as there must exist with them [these believers] some latent caprice and a voracity for a vile habit that subsumes [both of] them. One cannot be

assured that they will not fall into disbelief [by such friendship] as a result of the overpowering of caprice and the soul; [*do you desire to give God over you*] *a clear warrant?*, a manifest argument in favour of requiting you, as a result of the taking root [in you] of that configuration through which you incline to friendship of them by being their companions and mixing socially with them?

[4:145] [*Verily, the hypocrites will be*] *in the lowest level [of the Fire]*, on account of his increased chastisement, the severity of his torture and burning, and not on account of its being the lowest level, for the effect of the Fire on the hypocrite is more severe and more painful given that there is a remnant of preparedness in him. As for the original bovine disbeliever, because of the lack of any preparedness in him does not suffer in his chastisement the pain which the hypocrite suffers, even if he should be in a worse state than him and endure a greater chastisement and degradation; [*and you will never find for them*] *a helper*, to help them from God's chastisement, because both their connection and the raising of their love [to God] together with [that of] the folk of God are severed [from them].

[4:146] *Save those who repent*, [those] who return to God through a remnant of the light of [their] preparedness and [their] acceptance of the support of divine assistance, *and make amends*, for what they have corrupted of their preparedness by curbing caprice, breaking the attributes of the soul, and eliminating the veils of the faculties by means of renunciation and spiritual discipline; *and hold fast to God*, by grabbing hold of the rope of volition and the strength of resolve in turning towards Him, *and make their religion purely God's*, by annihilating the impediments to wayfaring such as the attributes of the soul, and [by] eliminating subtle idolatrous association and desisting from the contemplation of the other [than God] during the wayfaring, *those are with the believers*, who are certain, *and God will certainly give the believers a great wage*, in the way of witnessing the self-disclosures of the attributes and the garden of the acts.

[4:150] *Those who disbelieve*, [those] who veil themselves from the Truth and from religion, and from the union and from differentiation, *and seek to divide between God and His messengers*, by veiling themselves from religion but not the Truth and from differentiation but not the union, and so deny the messengers estimating that unity is incompatible with multiplicity and that union is inconsistent with differentiation: that is how they end up believing in some things and disbelieving in others: [*and say, 'We believe in some, and disbelieve in some'*] *and seek to adopt*, a way between total faith, in union and differentiation, and total disbelief.

[4:151] *Those are the disbelievers*, the ones who are veiled, *truly*, by their essences and attributes, for their knowledge [of God] is illusory and erroneous, their affirmation of Oneness a clandestine unbelief. They are following neither religion nor truth; [*and We*

*have prepared for the disbelievers a chastisement] that is humiliating*, humiliating them by the existence of the veil and the ignominy of the soul and its attributes.

[4:152] *And those who believe in God and His messengers*, at the levels of union and differentiation, [*We shall surely give them] their wages*, in the way of the three gardens. *God is ever Forgiving*, concealing from them their essences and attributes, which constitute their sins and their veils, with His essence and attributes, *Merciful*, to them by granting them the bliss of the three gardens and of the existence that is bestowed from [His Name] the Truth and of timeless subsistence.

[4:153] [*The People of the Scripture will ask of you to cause] a Book from the heaven*, a certain knowledge, [*to be revealed to them*], by means of an unveiling from the heaven of the spirit. [*They asked Moses for] something greater than that*, since witnessing is greater and more exalted than unveiling, [*for they said, 'Show us God openly' so the thunderbolt seized them] for their evildoing*, for demanding the witnessing while their essences subsisted, because the existence of remnants at the moment of witnessing is to have something in a place where it does not belong. To demand a witnessing while there are remnants is a tyranny of the soul that arises from its contemplation of the perfections of the attributes for itself, and that is an injustice; [*and We bestowed upon Moses clear] authority*, the capacity to have mastery over them through a proof against them after his return to consciousness.

[4:158] [From where He says] *Nay, God raised him [Jesus] up to Him*, to where He says, *but will assuredly believe in him*: the raising of Jesus, peace be upon him, is the conjunction of his spirit to the upper world upon separation from the lower world; his being in the fourth heaven is an allusion to the fact that the source of the effusion of his spirit is the spirituality of the solar sphere which is the equivalent of the heart of this world and to which was his [Jesus'] return. This spirituality is a light that puts the said sphere into motion by virtue of its being the lover and the irradiation of its rays on his soul, which carries out the moving of that [sphere]. Since his return was to his original resting place and he did not arrive at true perfection, it is necessary that he will come back down at the end of time by attaching himself to another body. Thereupon everyone will know him and the People of the Scripture will believe in him, that is, the folk of knowledge, the knowers of the origins and the final return every single one of them before Jesus [finally] dies by being annihilated in God. When they believe in him that will be the Day of Resurrection, that is, the day in which they will emerge from their corporeal veils and their rise from their state of forgetfulness and the life of ease in which they are now.

[4:159] [*he will be] a witness*, witnessing them, the Truth disclosing Himself to them in his form, as has been alluded to.



[4:160] *And because of the*, tremendous, *evildoing of some of those of Jewry*, that is, because of their worship of the calf of the soul and their assuming it as a deity and their refraining from entering into the village which was the presence of the spirit, and their transgression of the Sabbath by contravening the divine law and their veiling themselves from the unveiling of the unity of the acts and their breaking of God's covenant and their veiledness from the self-disclosures of the attributes, which constituted their disbelief of God's signs and their immersion in all manner of vices, such as the slaying of prophets and imputing lies to God by virtue of their hearts being sealed, that is, covered with moral veils which cannot be removed, and because of their tremendous calumny against Mary and their claim to have slain Jesus, peace be upon him, are all traits which come together to constitute an evildoing the quintessence of which cannot be fathomed. *We have forbidden them certain good things*, the gardens of bliss in the way of the self-disclosures of the acts and the attributes and the presential vision of the Essence, all of which are good things the quintessence of which cannot be fathomed, *that were lawful for them*, in line with the receptivity of their preparedness, were it not for the impediments mentioned; *and because of their barring*, of people by their companionship of them and their calling them to error, or by barring their spiritual faculties, *from God's way ...*

[4:161] *And because of their taking*, the usury of the excesses of knowledge, such as disputation and argumentativeness, corporeal pleasures and shares from which they had been forbidden; *and their consuming people's wealth through falsehood*, through the vice of covetousness and [their wicked] nature, as in the acceptance of bribes and wages for falsification and deception, or [through] the use of the knowledge of the spiritual faculties from reflection to speculative or scientific reason in order to secure foods and drink, and the acquisition of the useless ephemera [of this world], as well as the actualisation of sensory pleasures and lusts and predatorial and beastly goals, [We have prepared] a painful chastisement for the existence of their preparedness.

[4:162] *But those who are firmly rooted in knowledge*, that is, the verifiers, *among them and those who believe*, with the corresponding and fixed traditional faith, *believing in what has been revealed to you*, to the end [of the verse], that is, possessing the attributes of being cleansed and [spiritually] adorned, *and those who believe [in God]*, those who affirm the Oneness through eyewitness, *and the Last Day*, those who witness with the eye the states of the final return as it really is — *[to them We shall surely give] a great wage*, from the shares of the self-disclosures of the attributes and the gardens of these [attributes];

[4:165] *messengers bearing good tidings*, of the self-disclosures of the attributes of [divine] gentleness, *and warning*, of the self-disclosures of the attributes of the [divine]

vanquishing, *so that people might have no argument against God*, [no] manifestation [of their souls] or mastery by the existence of some attribute after these have been removed and effaced as a result of the [spiritual] reinforcement of the messengers. *God is ever Mighty*, Powerful, vanquishing them by effacing their attributes and annihilating their essences, *Wise*, only doing that out of the wisdom entailed in their assumption of His attributes or their subsistence in His Essence.

[4:166] *But God bears witness with what He has revealed to you*, since you are at the station of the union, while they are veiled and do not affirm it [the revelation]; rather He Himself bears witness that, *He has revealed it through His knowledge*, clothed with His knowledge, that is, in the state of His being Knower, such that it constitutes knowledge specifically His, neither your knowledge nor that of anyone other than you other than Him; *and the angels also bear witness*, because of your being mindful of the differentiated modes outside the union. Thus He is the witness through His Essence, His Names and His Attributes, *and God suffices as a Witness*, in other words, the Essence together with the Attributes suffice as testimony since there is no existent other than Him.

[4:167] [*Surely those*] *who disbelieve*, [those] who are veiled from the Truth by virtue of their errancy being, *far gone*.

[4:168] *Surely those who disbelieve*, [those] who have been veiled from religion, *and who have done wrong*, who have prevented their preparednesses from [realising] what is their right in terms of [realising their] perfection, by committing vices and unleashing the attributes of the soul upon their hearts, *it is not for God to forgive them*, because the configurations of these vices are firmly rooted in them and their preparedness has been invalidated, *nor to guide them to any path*, because of their composite ignorance, their corrupt belief, and their lack of knowledge of any of the paths of perfection,

[4:169] *except for the path of Hell*, the fires of the yearnings of their souls for their pleasures while they are deprived of them; *and that is*, an easy matter for God, because they are by nature drawn to these [pleasures].

[4:171] *O People of the Scripture, do not go to extremes in your religion*: as for [the extremism of] the Jews, it is their absorption in the exoteric and the denial of the esoteric aspects [of things], and [their] demotion of Jesus from the rank of prophethood and the station of the possession of the attributes of lordliness. In the case of the Christians, it is their absorption in the esoteric aspects and their denial of the exoteric as well as the elevation of Jesus to the station of divinity; *and do not say about God except the truth*, by combining [belief in both] the exoteric and esoteric aspects as well as the union and the differentiation, as is the case with the Muḥammadan affirmation of Oneness and with the statement that Jesus was the locus for the

manifestation of the divine attributes, drawing life from His life and calling to the station of the affirmation of descriptions; *and [Jesus is] His Word*, a disengaged soul, a word from among the words of God, that is, one of His spiritual realities, a spirit from among [many] spirits. *So believe in God and His messengers*, at the level of union and differentiation, *and do not say, 'Three'*, by adding life and knowledge to the essence such that the divinity becomes three things and Jesus becomes a part of His life at the breathing [into Mary]; or [do not say 'Three'] by differentiating between the essence of the Truth and the world of light and the world of darkness such that Jesus becomes generated by His light; rather believe in all [as one], since He is all and hence knowledge and life constitute His very essence, as well as the world of light and that of darkness, and Jesus becomes annihilated in Him, existing by His existence, alive by His life, knowing by His knowledge, all of which constitutes His essential unity, expressed in His words: *Verily, God is but One God. Glory be to Him*, exalted above that there should be an existent other than Him such that it can be generated from Him, separate itself [from Him] and share in His genus by being an existent like Him; nay, He is the [only] existent in the sense that He is existence. *To Him belongs all that is in the heavens*, spirits, *[and in] the earth*, bodies, being His Names and His exoteric and esoteric aspects; *[God suffices] as a Guardian*, standing in for creatures in terms of their acts, their attributes and their essences upon their annihilation in the affirmation of the Oneness, as the Commander of the Believers 'Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, said, 'There is no god except God after the annihilation of creatures'.

[4:172] *The Messiah would never disdain to be a servant of God*, at the station of differentiation, since if one considers the union neither the Messiah nor anyone else has any existence, and so it is impossible in the first place [for him to disdain anything]. If one considers the level of differentiation, any thing that has become manifest through entification is [necessarily] contingent and a contingent thing has no existence in of itself independent of any thing other than it, and so it is a needy, lowly servant that is dependent and is not disdainful of the submissiveness entailed in servanthood, even if it should have no need of being attached to a body by virtue of pure disengagement and being sanctified from the impurities of [physical] nature, such as the nigh angels, who are the disengaged spirits and the pure lights *Whoever disdains to worship Him*, by the manifesting of his ego, *and waxes proud*, in the tyranny of manifesting himself through his attributes, *He will assuredly muster them to Him, all of them*, by manifesting the light of His countenance and [by] His self-disclosure in the attribute of His vanquishing power so that they might be annihilated totally in the source of the union, as He has said, *To whom does sovereignty belong today? To God, the One, the Vanquisher* [Q. 40:16]. The Prophet said, 'God, exalted be He, has seventy thousand veils of light

and darkness. If He were to remove them, the august glories of His countenance would burn up everyone whose eyesight perceived Him’.

[4:173] *As for those who believed*, in the annihilation at the source of the union by the effacement of attributes and the obliteration of essence, *and who did righteous deeds*, by being upright in [their] deeds and mindful of the differentiations of [God’s] attributes and their self-disclosures, *He will pay them in full their wages*, and their attributes from the gardens of His attributes, *and He will give them more of His bounty*, by means of the existence that is bestowed on the essence after annihilation, *and as for them who disdain*, by manifesting their ego, *and are too proud*, becoming tyrannical upon the self-disclosures of the [divine] attributes and their being illumined by their light by manifesting themselves in these [attributes] and ascribing them to their own souls, as with [Pharaoh] the one who said *I am your most high lord!* [Q. 79:24], *He will chastise them with a painful chastisement*, for their veiling themselves behind the remnants of their essences and attributes, depriving them of the station of union; *and they shall not find*, besides God, *any supporter*, to support them in removing the veil of the essence, *or helper*, to help them [successfully] remove the proof-veil of the attributes, which is the affirmation of the Oneness of essence and the clear light, that is the differentiation at the source of the union, namely, the Qur’ān, which is the knowledge of the union, and the Distinguishing Criterion, which is the knowledge of the differentiation.

[4:175] *As for those who believe*, in the affirmation of the Oneness of essence and hold fast to it in light of the multiplicity of the attributes and their separations, and [who] are mindful of the union at the level of differentiation, *He will surely admit them to mercy*, from the gardens of the attributes, the quintessence of which cannot be known, *and bounty*, from the gardens of the Essence, *and He will guide them to Him by a straight path*, by remaining upright in maintaining the unity in light of the differentiations of multiplicity. Alternatively, [it means] a mercy from the gardens of the acts, bounty from the gardens of the attributes, and that He will guide them to Him by a straight path by way of the differentiations of the attributes towards the annihilation in the Essence. The former [interpretation] fits better in this instance. It is for you to effect a [similar] correspondence between the differentiations of your existence and the states of your soul wherever possible in this *sūra* on the basis of the rules that have already been mentioned in [the *sūra* of] Āl ‘Imrān [Q. 3], and God, exalted be He, knows best.

[4:176] *They will ask you for a pronouncement. Say: ‘God pronounces to you concerning indirect heirs. If a man perishes, having no children, but he has a sister, hers is half of what he leaves, and he is her heir, if she has no children. If there be two sisters, theirs are two-thirds of what he leaves; if there be siblings, men and women, then the male shall*

*receive the equivalent of the portion of two females. God makes clear to you, lest you go astray; and God has knowledge of all things’.*

## [5] al-Mā'ida

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[5:1] *O you who believe*, with cognitive faith, *fulfil your bonds*, that is, the resolutions which you have consolidated in the wayfaring. The difference between the covenant (*'abd*) and the bond (*'aqd*) here is that the covenant was the depositing in them of [the knowledge of] the Oneness since pre-eternity, as has been mentioned, while the bond is the consolidation of the resolutions to [fulfil] the obligations [of religion] imposed upon them so that they might be led to the fulfilment of what they were covenanted to. Thus the covenant comes first and the bond follows. Every resolution to do something requires the bringing out of what is in the preparedness from potentiality into actuality, a bond between the person and God which must be fulfilled and which must avoid invalidating by any neglectfulness or shortcoming. *Lawful to you*, are all types of enjoyments and shares through healthy souls, [souls] which are not overcome by predatorialness or covetousness, such as the souls whose natures are those of the three types of animal flocks, *except that which is [now] being recited to you*, of the enjoyments that are incompatible with virtuous traits and justness: these are forbidden [to you] because they veil [you] from [realising] perfection [at the level] of the individual or of the species, *game not being lawful to you when you are on pilgrimage*, that is, not enjoying shares while disengaging for the wayfaring and embarking on spiritual discipline for the journey to God desiring arrival; for in this case it is necessary to make do with what one is entitled to [only], because entering into pilgrim sanctity is manifestly the [outward] form of real entry into sanctity for those wayfaring along the path of the Ka'ba of connection and for those seeking to enter into the divine sanctuary and the pavilions of the attributes of Majesty and Perfection. *Verily, God decrees whatever He desires*, for whomever of His friends (*awliyā'*) He wishes.

[5:2] [*O you who believe*] *do not profane God's sacraments*, in the way of the stations and the states by which the state of the wayfarer in his wayfaring is known, such as patience, gratitude, trust, satisfaction and their like. In other words, do not commit the sins of the states and do not infringe the bounds of the station, for these are the sacred waymarks of God's pure religion. Just as these acknowledged places are marked out by the ritual that is performed thereat, such as the circumambulation, the pacing and the sacrifice and others, and [just as] the acknowledged acts of the pilgrimage are waymarks by which the pilgrim perceives his way, so these stations, levels and states are [also] waymarks by which the wayfarer perceives his state. And just as manifestly according to

the [divine] law it is not permitted that one change the places of these [waymarks] or infringe its rules, so it is with these [spiritual waymarks] according to the law of the lovers, as is related of one of them who used to talk [at length] about [the station of] patience. When a scorpion pounced onto his leg and began to sting him, he remained as he was and did not cast it off. He was asked about this and said, 'I am ashamed to speak so much of a station then do what it is contrary to it'; *nor the sacred month*, meaning the moment of entering into pilgrim sanctity for the true pilgrimage, which is the moment of the wayfaring and the arrival, [profaning it] by infringing its bounds and occupying oneself with what is incompatible with it and bars him from his orientation and slows him down in his journeying; *nor the offering*, nor the prepared soul that is made ready for the sacrificial offering upon arrival at the courtyard<sup>65</sup> of the divine presence, in the way mentioned, [profaning it] by using it for a purpose that distracts it from its path or weakens it, or by making it bear more than it has the capacity for in terms of spiritual discipline such that the person is severed [from the goal of wayfaring] before he has even reached [the desired] locus; *nor the garlands*, nor what the soul has garlanded itself with of the distinguishing mark of the wayfaring folk and of the [good] customary practices and outward deeds, by abandoning them or changing their condition; *nor those repairing to the Sacred House*, nor those purposeful seekers who are conscientious and industrious in their wayfaring, by causing them to change or preventing them from [pursuing their] spiritual discipline, or by belittling their resolve by interfering [with them] or reducing [their] ceremonious pacing, giving them the illusion that they have no need for any of that, or by distracting them with what bars them [from their spiritual purpose] or causes them to be idle, *while they seek bounty from their Lord*, by means of the self-disclosures of the acts, *and beatitude*, by means of the self-disclosures of the attributes. *But when you are discharged*, upon the return to subsistence after annihilation and uprightness, *then hunt for game*, that is, then you would not be at fault with regard to [enjoying] the shares. Nay, it may well be that permitting the soul to enjoy its shares is of assistance to it in its witnessings and unveilings given its nobleness, astuteness and its intense purity. *And let not hatred of a people*, to the end [of the verse]: that is, let not some ego-centric faculties that impede you from your wayfaring lead you to vanquish these [faculties] totally by preventing them from the rights to which they are entitled so that you end up invalidating these [duties] or impairing them from [receiving] these benefits and what is required of their acts as a result of your barring of them, for the evil consequence of such will fall on you;

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<sup>65</sup> The term *fanā'*, of course, also means 'annihilation', but that is to be understood as prefiguring the arrival.

or [the verse means] let not the enmity of some from among your folk or kin or friends, because they have prevented you from disengagement or from spiritual discipline in the wayfaring, *cause you to commit aggression*, against them by way of causing them harm or loathing them or desiring that evil befall them, for that will cause more harm to you in terms of your wayfaring than their prevention of you. *Help one another to righteousness and piety*, by controlling these faculties and managing them delicately by being kind to them with regard to what they are entitled to and by preventing them from their shares, or by being considerate towards relatives, kin and friends by being indulging them and being kind to them and honouring duties towards them even as you do not obey them concerning that which would prevent you from such [righteousness and piety], avoiding it as God, exalted be He, says: *then do not obey them, but keep company with them in this world honourably* [Q. 31:15]. *And fear God*, by making [fear of Him] a means of protection [from error] for you in such matters and be wary of contravening Him in such [matters]; *surely God is severe in retribution*, requiting you with sanction and privation.

[5:3] *Forbidden to you is carrion*: these are the exceptions from among the kinds of lawful enjoyments and they are carrion, that is, extinguished desire which is the vice of excess that is incompatible with contentment, such as effeminacy or the inability to pursue the [minimal] necessary of enjoyments or to partake of enjoyment with a loss of moderation in the appetitive faculty as is the case with effeminates and certain flirts, as well as those ascetics and renouncers in character, who fall short of [the requirements of] wayfaring by their lack of preparedness; *and blood*, that is, enjoying the caprices of the soul in deeds, for the admixing of caprice and its tarnishing effect spoils all deeds; *and the flesh of swine*, and all aspects of enjoyment that are actualised through covetousness and avarice, for the faculty of covetousness is the vilest of faculties and the most obstructive of the paths to perfection and salvation; *and what has been hallowed to other than God*, that is acts of spiritual discipline and deeds performed for show and all that is done for other than God, as the breaking of the soul, curbing it and opposing it does not count as a beautiful and meritorious act and an aid to wayfaring unless it is [done] for the sake of God. If it is done for other than God, it is an act of [idolatrous] association and association is the greatest of grave sins; *and the beast strangled*, that is, restricting the soul from vices and preventing it from despicable acts by the actualisation of forms of virtues and the issuing forth of good acts in forms [contaminated] with caprice, for acts of the soul are virtuous when it is curbed and vanquished for the sake of God, and when [its] caprice, its source of vigour and life, leaves it so that it subsists by the will of the heart, similar to when blood, which is the life force of an animal, is let



out upon its being slaughtered for the sake of God; *and the beast beaten down*, that is, when qualities of excellence issue forth outwardly from the soul while it is averse to that and must be coerced to it; *and the beast fallen*, those [enjoyments] which are connected to excess, diminution and inclination to the lower aspect and the soul's lapsing from [its] sublime aspirations and the powerful degree; *and the beast gored*, that which issues forth out of fear and of being compelled out of the like, such as the probity that comes about by means of the reprimands of the market inspector and out of the fear of being disgraced; *and what beasts of prey have devoured*, such as the virtues of probity that come about as a result of the intensity of the irascible faculty in the way of pride and passion and the mastery of wrath. For when wrath becomes master it prevents the intensity from working, or [that come about] as a result of a repression of a repressor such as a king or a commander — *except for what you have sacrificed duly*, except what has become conjoined to you and a habit for you and is obedient to you after being repressed by another such that virtues issue from it by the will of the heart without any admixture of caprice; *and what has been sacrificed in [the name of] idols*, what is done on the basis of habits which must be eliminated, unless it relates to a rational or law-fulfilling purpose; *and that you apportion through the divining of arrows*, and that you seek felicities and perfections by means of descriptions and risings relying on what God has decreed and determined, neglecting conscious effort and industry in the pursuit [of these]; and you make that an excuse for falling short [of the required] by saying, 'there is no share in it for us, for had there been a share for us [therein] it would have materialised'. Perhaps this was simply an excuse while according to the [divine] decree his perfection has been made contingent on his conscious effort, but he has failed to discover that; *that is wickedness*, a violation of religion, that which is the path of truth. *Today*, that is, at the moment of the actualisation of perfection resulting from the training of the soul with qualities of excellence and its firm adherence to resolutions, *the disbelievers have despaired*, that is, the veiled faculties of your souls, or your offspring and your ilk from among the natural philosophers and the belief-feigning atheists, *of your religion*, that is [they have despaired] from barring you from the path of truth; *therefore do not fear them*, for then they will overcome you, *but fear Me*, by not stopping at the self-disclosure of any one of My attributes and being in awe of the tremendousness of My Essence until you have arrived at the station of annihilation. *Today I have perfected your religion for you*, by explaining the sacraments and the method of wayfaring, *and I have completed My favour upon you*, by guiding [you] to Me, *and I have approved for you*, submission and obedience through effacement upon the self-disclosure of [My] acts and attributes, or [I have approved for you] the surrender of [your] faces for annihilation upon the self-disclosure of the Essence, *as*

*religion. But whoever is constrained*, to [engage in] one of the forbidden things which we have enumerated, *by emptiness*, by a severe agitation of the soul or an overwhelming as a result of the manifestation of one its attributes, *not inclining purposely to sin*, not deviating from religion and the orientation [of the wayfaring] toward a preventive vice deliberately and resolutely, *then God is Forgiving*, covering that up for him by the light of one of His attributes that counters it, *Merciful*, with the reinforcement of divine assistance in order to manifest perfection and remove the barriers to it.

[5:4] *Say: 'The good things are made lawful for you*, from among the realities and the truth-derived gnoses and cognitive virtues that are actualised for you through your intellects, your hearts and your spirits; *and what you have taught*, of the predatory creatures of your internal and external senses and all your faculties and corporeal limbs to acquire virtues and refined dispositions, inciting [them], *teaching them of what God has taught you*, in the way of knowledge relating to character traits and divine prescriptions that elucidate the means by which shares are secured in an equitable manner; *so eat what they have caught for you*, what these [senses] have procured for you as a result of your teaching of them in the proper way, with an intention and a will that derives from the heart and a sound purpose that leads to the perfection of the individual or the species, without that these [senses] stir, bear their teeth and heave in agitation over it [the quarry] out of an inclination and a covetousness for the pursuit of their pleasures and lusts. *And mention God's name over it*, and be present with your hearts to [declare] that this quarry is being sought and desired for the [fulfilment of the] perfect human form and not for any other purpose. And take God as a guard for your when you do that so that it might be virtuous. *Indeed, God is swift at the reckoning*, for He reckons with you instantly concerning this and not over periods of time, as [can be seen] in the [sorts of] configurations that result in your souls as [soon as] you commit these [acts].

[5:6] *O you who believe*, with cognitive faith, *when you rise*, up from the sleep of [spiritual] forgetfulness and seek out the prayer of the presence, the real communion and the orientation towards the Truth, *wash your faces*, that is, cleanse the existence of your hearts with the cleansing water of pure and beneficial knowledge in the way of the knowledge of the divine laws, [virtuous] character traits and the transactions that entail the elimination of the barriers against the sullyng of the attributes of the soul; *and your hands*, that is, your powers, [cleanse them] from the filth of partaking of lusts and disposing of abominable matter, *up to the elbows*, up to the measure of what is due by right and what is beneficial, *and wipe your heads*, [wipe away] in the direction of your spirits the darkness of the turbidity of the heart and the dust of its changing when it

orients itself towards the lower world and [towards] the love of this world by the light of guidance. For the spirit is not sullied by attachment but its light is veiled from the heat and the heart in turn becomes black and darkens. It suffices for the diffusion of its [the spirit's] light to polish the higher aspect of the heart that is adjacent to it,<sup>66</sup> since the heart has two aspects, one of which is towards the spirit and the head, and is the one referred to here, while the other is towards the soul and its faculties and it is more likely that the feet [here] are a reference to this [latter]; *and your feet*, those aspects of your natural corporeal faculties, [wash these] by shaking off the dust of being engrossed in lusts and excessive indulgence in pleasures, *up to the ankles*, up to the level of moderation by which the body becomes upright. According to this then, the one who is engrossed in lusts and indulges excessively in pleasures is in need of washing it [the soul] with the waters of the knowledge of [virtuous] character traits and the knowledge of spiritual disciplining so that it might return to the purity with which the heart prepares for the presence and the communion [with the divine]. As for the one whose pool is near in terms of these by virtue of his moderation, it suffices him to wipe, which is why the one who must wipes and the one who must washes. *If you are defiled*, [if you are] distant from the Truth by having been drawn to the lower aspect and by having turned away from the higher aspect with total inclination towards the soul, *purify yourselves*, totally from this dark configuration and vile attribute that entail distance and veiledness; *but if you are sick*, to the end [of the verse] reiterates [the same points]. *God does not desire to make any hardship for you*, any constraint or difficulty by means of extensive [spiritual] struggles and acts of endurance, *but He desires to*, purify you from dark configurations and vile attributes, *and that He may perfect His grace upon you*, by perfecting [you], *so that you might give thanks*, for the grace of [your] perfection by being upright and fulfilling what is due in terms of justness upon subsistence after annihilation.

[5:7] [*And remember*] *God's grace upon you*, in guiding [you] to the path of arrival, *and His covenant*, that is, the bonds of the resolutions made for His sake as mentioned, since you accepted these from the source of prophethood by the purity of [your] primordial nature.

[5:8] *that is nearer to God-fearing*, that is to say, the intellect is more able to disengage from the doubts that garb the attributes of the soul and to assume the attributes of God, exalted be He, as a protective guard, as it is the noblest of excellent qualities which if actualised is followed by all [the rest]. *And fear God*, take Him as your guard

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<sup>66</sup> Read *alladhī yalibi*, instead of *alladhī ilayhi*.

to ensure that equity issues forth from you, for the fountainhead of perfections and excellent virtues is His Essence, exalted be He; *surely God is aware of what you do*, whether this issues from the attributes of your souls or from Him.

[5:9] *God has promised those who believe*, among you, with the cognitive affirmation of Oneness, *and perform righteous deeds*, that help them to arrive at the entific affirmation of Oneness and prepares them for it, *they shall have forgiveness*, by their attributes, *and a great wage*, from the self-disclosures of His attributes, exalted be He.

[5:11] *when a people*, from among the faculties and attributes of your veiled souls, *purposed to extend their hands against you*, by holding sway [over you], vanquishing [you] and dominating you in order to actualise their goals and pleasures, He restrained them from you by means of the methods of purifying [yourselves] and exalting [Him] which He has shown you; *and fear God*, and take Him as a shield by which you can vanquish this [people] and restraining them, *and in God let the believers put their trust*, by seeing that all acts are from Him.

[5:12] [*God had made*] *a covenant with the Children of Israel*, the covenant mentioned [below]. The twelve leaders are the five external senses, the five internal ones, as well as the considerative intelligent faculty and the cognitive intelligent faculty. *And God said: 'I am with you*, in the subsequent bond [ensuing from the covenant], granting you assistance and help, that if you fulfil the dues in terms of self-purification and withdrawal in the way of refraining from corporeal felicities by means of devotions and abandoning the external felicities by means of renunciation and giving preference to the third, which is belief in the messengers of the intellect and in the inspirations, correct reflective thoughts, sincere thoughts coming in from the spirit, the heart, and [from] the reinforcement of the angelic realm, and by succouring these [messengers], that is, exalting them by unleashing them against the devils of estimation, reinforcing them and protecting these [messengers] from their [these devils'] whisperings and [their] casting [upon them] of illusory, imaginary and ego-centric thoughts, *and lend to God a goodly loan*, by acquitting yourselves totally from [claims to] the might, strength, knowledge and power that belong [only] to God in terms of the acts and attributes in their entirety, then from the Essence by means of [your] effacement, annihilation and surrender of these [acts and attributes] to God, *I will absolve you of your evil deeds*, that is, [of] the existences of these three, which constitute your veils and your impediments, *and I will admit you to gardens*, of My acts, My attributes and My essence, *underneath which rivers flow*, [these rivers being] the forms of knowledge relating to trust [in God], satisfaction, surrender, and the affirmation of the Oneness, which as a whole constitute the knowledge of the self-disclosures of the acts, the attributes and the Essence. Thus

whoever remains veiled after this covenant and [after] the sending forth of leaders from among you, *surely he has strayed*, from the way that is made straight by the truth.

[5:13] [*So because of their breaking their covenant, We cursed them and made their hearts*] *hard*: these [hearts] hardened as a result of the soul's attributes holding sway over them and because of their inclination towards solid and hardened earthly affairs, and so they have become veiled from the lights of the angelic realm and the realm of the divine attributes, which constitute the words of God; they exchanged the faculties of their souls for these [affairs] and implemented their illusions and imaginations instead of their gnoses and realities in the way of intelligible concepts, or they mixed them together, which is [what is meant by] the distortion of words from their contexts; *and they have forgotten a share*, that is, a substantial portion of what they were given in a former covenant in terms of the latent perfections within their preparedness [that reside therein] in potentiality and they were therefore reminded of this [share] in the subsequent covenant; *and you will never cease to discover some treachery on their part*, that is, some infraction of the covenant or the withholding of some trust because of the sway acquired over them by the attributes of the soul and by Satan and because of the hardness of their hearts [*except for a few of them. Yet pardon them, and forgive; surely God loves*] *the virtuous*, who witness such folk as they endure God's trial but do not counter them with requital; rather they treat them with forgiveness and pardon.

[5:14] *So We have stirred up among them enmity and hatred*, that is to say, We have forced this upon them because of the mutually opposed exigencies of their predatory, bestial and satanic faculties and [because of] their inclining towards the lower aspect, that which necessarily entails contrareity and mutual resistance by virtue of their veiledness from the light of the affirmation of the Oneness and their distance from the world of Holiness wherein lie purposes in their entirety entailing neither mutual attraction nor mutual resistance, until the moment of their rising by the manifestation of the light of the spirit and the major resurrection by the manifestation of the light of the affirmation of the Oneness; *and God will assuredly inform them*, of the punishment for what they have wrought at the point of death and the manifestation of privation and loss at the manifestation of the despicable and hurtful configurations deeply rooted in them.

[5:17] *They indeed are disbelievers those who say, 'God is the Messiah*, by confining divinity to him and restricting the Deity by entifying Him; [*if He desires*] *to destroy the Messiah, son of Mary*, to where He says, *all together?*', by annihilating them in the affirmation of the Oneness and obliterating them in other than the union, as He has said *Everything will perish except His countenance* [Q. 28:88]? *And to God belongs the*

*kingdom of the heavens*, that is, the world of the spirits, *and the earth*, the world of bodies, *and all that is between them*, of forms and accidents, the manifest and the hidden in their entirety, as well as His names, His attributes and His acts.

[5:21] [*O my people*] *enter the Holy Land*, that is, [into] the presence of the heart, which is the self-disclosure of the attributes, for in relation to the heaven of the spirit it [the heart] is the earth, *which God has ordained for you*, [which] He has specified for you in a preceding decree, having deposited in your preparedness [the means to achieve] the arrival to it and the stationing [of yourselves] therein, *and do not turn back in flight*, by inclining to the city of the body and pursuing it by seeking to actualise its [the body's] desires and pleasures, seeking to satisfy it and to adorn its configurations, for it [the body] constitutes a station that is anterior to your station and baser and inferior to your level, *or you will end up as losers*, in exchanging the lights of the heart for the darkneses of the body, and the goodly aspects of the former for the vile aspects of the latter.

[5:22] [*They said, 'O Moses*] *there are a tyrant people in it*, in the way of the sultan of estimation and the princes of caprice, wrath, lust and all the other pharaonic attributes of the soul which they have seized by force and by subjugation and they have mastery over them, dominating them and compelling all to [follow] their whims; we have no strength against them and are unable to resist them. They said that because they had become habituated to physical pleasures and carnal appetites and because of their being overcome by caprice. Thus they were unable to pursue spiritual disciplining, or to curb desire, or to curtail the attributes of the soul through spiritual struggle; *we will never enter it until they depart from it*, that is, [until] God should turn them out of it without any spiritual discipline or struggle on our part, or [until] they depart out of [their own] nature, despite the impossibility of this, or [until] their sway be weakened as is the case with [the advent of] old age, despite the fact that they would not be able to enter it then.

[5:23] *There said two men of those who feared*: the two were from among the twelver leaders — and they were the considerative intellect and the cognitive intellect, who feared the evil sequel of contiguity with the body and the evil consequence of being punished with its dark configurations — *to whom God had been gracious*, by guiding them to the straight path and the upright religion: *'Enter against them by the gate!*, the gate of the village of the heart, which is trust through the self-disclosures of the acts, just as the gate of the village of the spirit is satisfaction. *For if*, you enter by the station of trust which is the gate of the village, *you will be victorious*, by having departed from your acts and your states and by being agents through God. For if might and strength

are [procured] through God, the Satan of estimation and imagination as well as caprice and wrath shall flee from you and you shall be made victorious. That the gate is trust is indicated by His words: *Put your trust in God, if you are*, truly, *believers*, for faith when it is absent to the one adhering to it is the least of the degrees of presence at the self-disclosures of the acts.

[5:24] *They said, 'O Moses*, that is, they persisted in their refusal and their refraining from entry. *So go forth, you and your Lord, and fight*, that is to say, if you are [truly] a prophet then drive them away by the power of your soul and curb the caprice and those faculties in us without any spiritual discipline or struggle on our part, and ask your Lord to drive them away from us, as shrewd scoundrels [are given to] say when you admonish them, rebuke them and threaten them, 'Why don't you rid us of this wretchedness by your own resolve!', either in mockery and out of obduracy, or earnestly and out of conviction; *we will be sitting here*, we will adhere to our place at the station of the soul, cleaving to the whims of our souls and the pleasures of our bodies, as they said, '*Hittan samqāthā!*'<sup>67</sup>

[5:26] *He said: 'Then it shall be forbidden them for forty years; they shall wander lost in the land*: this constitutes the duration of their subsisting at the station of the soul. In other words, they remained in the wilderness of nature wandering perplexed for forty years [searching] for the village of the heart. For entry into the station of the heart when it is under the mastery of the tyrannical attributes of the soul is forbidden and prohibited. That is why He says [elsewhere] *until when he is attained maturity and has attained forty years* [Q. 46:15], for that is the moment of true maturity. It is related of this story of the wandering in the wilderness that they would journey earnestly all day the distance of six parasangs, but when it came to evening they found that they were still at the same station from which they had departed [earlier]. In other words, their endeavour was focused on the actualisation of carnal satisfactions and corporeal desires, which were confined to the six aspects and did not depart from these [six] aspects by disengaging. Thus they were [still] at the first station because they failed to orient themselves towards the azimuth of the heart by seeking disengagement and rising above corporeal configurations and ego-centric attributes. At night a column of fire would descend from the heaven by whose light they could journey and benefit; that is to say, there would descend upon them the light of the intellect of livelihood from the heaven of the spirit and they would be guided thereby to their welfare. It is described as being 'of fire' because it is an intellect that is blemished by illusion and not a pure intellect,

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<sup>67</sup> Cf. Kāshānī's commentary to Q. 2:59, above.

for otherwise they would have been guided thereby to the path of the heart. As for the clouds, the manna and the quails, these have already been mentioned along with their interpretation. It is said that every child born in the wilderness had a shirt that was the length of his body and would grow as the child grew; by this they meant the garb of the body, but God knows best. If you wish to effect the correspondence between this story and your state, then you should interpret Moses as the heart and Aaron as the spirit, since he was his elder brother, which is why he said *he is more eloquent than me in speech* [Q. 28:34], and [you would interpret] the Children of Israel as the spiritual faculty and the Holy Land as the reassured soul and would then recount the story as it stands to the end; *so do not grieve for the wicked folk*, that is, do not be concerned to guide them and do not be distressed by their punishment, for they are indeed wicked, having departed from the path of the heart by their own caprice and insolence.

[5:27] *And recite to them the story of the two sons of Adam*, [Adam] of the heart, of the two who are Abel of the heart and Cain of estimation. Each of them had a twin. As for the twin of the intellect, this is the cognitive intelligence (*āqila ʿilmiyya*) that manages the affairs relating to livelihood and the final return by means of beneficial opinions that require righteous deeds and excellent characters traits which are able to infer all types of handiwork and rules of governance. As for the twin of the estimative faculty, this is the imaginal faculty that has free disposal of objects of sensory perception and particular meanings for the purpose of actualising satanic opinions. Thus the Adam of the heart commanded that the estimative faculty be married to the twin of the intellect, namely, the cognitive intelligence so that it might acquire mastery over it by means of rational proof-based analogies and that it might train it by means of obedience-inducing forms of spiritual disciplining and spiritual manipulation, making it subject to the intellect so that it might become obedient to the father-heart, be kind to him and be dutiful towards him and designate him in righteous deeds and refrain from being disobedient to him through corrupt satanic enticements and embellishments and by tempting the soul to these through wicked configurations and evil deeds. As for the marrying of the intellect the twin of estimation, that is in order to make it righteous and to prevent it from lusting after corrupt imaginations and from the goading of the mendacious conversations of the soul so that its father [the heart] might find rest from it and exercise it in intelligible and sensory objects as well as universal and particular meanings so that it then becomes a reflective entity that works to actualise forms of knowledge and its father thereby profits. The Cain of estimation was envious of the Abel of the intellect since his [Abel's] twin was more beautiful to him [Abel] and more beloved [to him] on account of its correspondence to him. Their father the heart commanded that



each of them offer a sacrifice, a ritual slaughter, with which to draw nearer to God by means of the effusion of the result [of the sacrifice] and the annihilation of the analogous form and the acceptance of the universal intelligible form [of the sacrifice] that corresponds to the very thing that is his ritual sacrifice by which he seeks nearness to God. The non-acceptance of the sacrifice of estimation, which is a fraudulent form or a particular illusory form, is due to the impossibility of the conjunction of the intellect to it at the effusion of the result since there is no result therefrom, or it is due to the impossibility of the acceptance of the illusory form, since there is no correspondence to the very thing [being sacrificed]. Thus his envy increased against him: *He said, 'I will surely slay you'*, that is, the closer that the intellect drew to God and the further away it became from the level of estimation in terms of the objects of its perception and objects of disposal, the more eager was the desire of the estimation to invalidate its [the intellect's] deed and to prevent it from its act, as when you see [the appearance of the] doubts induced by illusion and its [estimation's] opposition to the intellect's actualisation of profound considerative pursuits. As for his slaying, this expresses its [the estimation's] attempt to prevent it [the intellect] from its act and to sever from it any reinforcement from the spirit and the light of guidance from which the intellect draws life. [*The other said, God accepts only*] *from the God-fearing*: those who take God as their protective shield when good things issue from them, or who guard against the sins of dark corporeal configurations, invalid fabrications, misleading deceptions, ruinous caprices and destructive temptations.

[5:28] *'I will not extend my hand against you to slay you*, because I shall not invalidate your deeds, which in their contexts are intense, in the way of objects of sensory perception; nor shall I sever from you your life which is the sustenance of the soul and of desire; nor shall I prevent you from any act that is specific to you, for the intellect knows that the particular benefits, the rules governing sensory objects and the particular meanings attached to these and the hierarchic arrangement of the means to livelihood are not actualised or facilitated except by means of estimation. Were it not for hope and the actualisation of wishes and aspirations produced by the estimation, no one would have any means of acquiring a livelihood. *I fear God, the Lord of the Worlds*, because I know Him — He says *Indeed only those of God's servants who have knowledge [truly] fear Him* [Q. 35:28] — and I know that He created you for a purpose and brought you into existence for a wisdom and so I do not [suppose to] interfere with His purpose in that.

[5:29] *I desire that you should end up with my sin*, the sin of slaying me and the sin of your slaying in the way of false opinions and corrupt conceptualisations because of which your sacrificial offering was not accepted, *and so become an inhabitant of the Fire*,

of veiledness and privation. *That is the requital of the evildoers*, of those who place things in other than their contexts such as your application of the rules governing sensory things in the context of intelligible things.

[5:30] *Then his soul prompted*, facilitated and enticed, *him to slay his brother, so he slew him*, by preventing him from his specific acts and veiling him from the light of guidance, *and became one of the losers*, because of his suffering harm by his assumption of mastery over the intellect and exchanging the guidance and rightness of the intellect for his own misguidance and wrongness. For when estimation suffers the severing of the support of the intellect, it prompts the soul by all manner of temptations and [seductive] embellishments to indulge in things by which both the soul and the body suffer harm, such as those reprehensible acts of immoderation in the way of bestial and predatorial pleasures such as extreme covetousness in the pursuit of wealth and repute and excess, and therefore estimation is weakened or even invalidated.

[5:31] *Then God sent forth*, the raven of covetousness, *scratching into*, the earth of the soul, *to show him how he might hide the nakedness of his brother*, meaning, estimation, because by its severing of the intellect from the light of guidance and its veiling of it from the journeying in the upper world to actualise perfection and to pursue the felicity of the end, becomes perplexed regarding itself, whereupon covetousness was sent forth and guided it in the wilderness of misguidance and showed it how to hide and bury its nakedness, that is, its slain corpse which estimation bore upon its shoulders until it had putrified. Thus the intellect of livelihood ended up under the soil of the earth, which is the form of the intellect that has been severed from the life of the spirit, blemished by estimation and caprice, veiled from its world in the darkneses of the earth of the soul, within which it lies buried as it is being consumed by the worms of the natural faculties which use it in order to actualise their pleasures and goals. *He said, 'Woe to me! Am I not able to be as this raven*, which has buried its youngling, that is, its herald or its perfection, in the earth of the soul by annihilating what can be actualised for it and suppressing it therein, *and so hide my brother's nakedness?'*, by concealing it in the darkness of the soul and thus profit from it. *And he became one of the remorseful*, upon this loss and the resulting privation;

[5:32] *it shall be as if he had slain mankind altogether*, because every individual [human] entails what is entailed by every individual of that species, for a species subsists in the one as it subsists in all outwardly and number has no bearing in this respect, for a species is not augmented in reality by the number of its individuals nor is it diminished by its being restricted to the one.

[5:35] *O you who believe, fear God*, by purifying yourselves, *and seek the means to Him*, by [spiritual] adornment, *and struggle in His way*, by the effacement of [your] attributes and the annihilation in the Essence, *so that you might prosper*, against the manifestation of the remnants of [your] attributes and essences.

[5:36] [*Truly, as for the disbelievers, if they possessed*] *all that is in the earth*, that is, what is contained in the lower aspect, as these are the causes for the increase of the veil and [of] distance, and the only success can be found in the upper aspect in the way of gnosés and luminous realities.

[5:48] *And We have revealed to you the Book*, the knowledge of the Criterion which is the manifestation of the differentiations of your perfection, *with the truth confirming the Book that was before it*, that is, the knowledge of the Qurʾān, which is the undifferentiated knowledge that is fixed in your preparedness and watches over you by its manifestation; or [confirming] what was before it of the forms of knowledge that were sent down to prophets who preceded [you] in time. For in the case of Moses, when he returned to subsistence upon [his] annihilation by means of the divinely bestowed existence, it was the faculty of the soul and its authority that was dominant in him, which is why he struck his brother, as where God says *and he seized his brother by the head, dragging him toward him* [cf. Q. 7:150], and [why] when he asked for the self-disclosure he said *my Lord, show me that I may behold You* [Q.7:143]. Thus most of the Torah consisted of the knowledge of judgements, that which is concerned with the states of the soul and its refinement, its call being an exoteric one. In the case of Jesus, the dominant was the faculty of the heart and its light, which is why he disengaged himself from the apparel of this world, enjoined monasticism and would say to some of his disciples ‘Whoever shall smite you on your [right] cheek, then turn to him who has smote you the other cheek also’ [Matt. 5:39]. Most of the Gospel consisted of the knowledge of the self-disclosures of the attributes, character traits, admonitions, and counsels that are concerned with the states of the heart, its purification and its illumining, its call being an esoteric one. In the case of Muḥammad, peace and blessings be upon him, the dominant was the sway of the spirit and its light. Thus he brought together to all the noble character traits, completing of them, equitable in judgements and moderate therein. Thus the Qurʾān encompassed what was contained in both [of the preceding] scriptures in terms of knowledge, judgements and gnosés, confirming all of it and watching over it, as well as [containing] supplementary material concerning the affirmation of Oneness, love [of God] and the call to the proclamation of the Oneness [of God]. *So judge between them according to what God has revealed*, of justice, which is the shadow of [divine] love, which is the shadow of [His inclusive] unity that

has been revealed to you, *and do not follow their whims*, by allowing either one of the two sides to predominate, be it the exoteric or the esoteric; *away from the truth that has come to you*, in the way of the affirmation of Oneness, [divine] love and justice. For the affirmation of Oneness entails love, and love entails justice and its shadow is cast from the heaven of the spirit unto the heart by means of love and unto the soul by means of justice. *To every one of you, We have appointed a divine law and a way*, a watering source, such as the source-path of the soul, the source-path of the heart and the source-path of the spirit, as well as a path such as the knowledge of judgements and transactions which is attached to the heart and the wayfaring along the esoteric path that leads to the arrival at the garden of the attributes; and [another path that is] the knowledge of the affirmation of the Oneness and the witnessing which is attached to the spirit and the wayfaring along the path of annihilation that leads to the arrival at the garden of the Essence. *If God had willed, He would have made you one community*, affirmers of Oneness following the original primordial nature, in agreement over one religion, *but that*, He may make manifest on you what He has given you in accordance with your preparednesses commensurate with the receptivity of each of you, so that as a result perfections are varied. *So vie with one another in good works*, that is, in those matters that lead to your perfection, that which has been decreed for [each of] you in accordance with your preparednesses and which brings you near to Him bringing that [potential] out into actuality; *to God you shall all return*, at the source of the union of existence in accordance with [your] levels, not at the source of the union of the Essence, *and He will then inform you of that in which you differed*, that is to say, He will make manifest upon you that in which you differed in accordance with your different preparednesses in terms of seeking one of the three gardens, arriving there, being deprived [therefrom] by the impediments by which you are veiled from the perfection that is [latent] in your preparedness.

[5:49] [*God desires to smite them*] *for some of their sins*, the sins of the Jews are the veilings of the acts, while the sins of the Christians are the veilings of the attributes. Thus the wickedness of the Jews is the infringement of the rules governing the self-disclosures of the divine acts by the soul's inspection of its own acts, while the wickedness of the Christians is the infringement of the rules governing the self-disclosures of the attributes of the Truth by the soul's inspection of its own attributes and its being veiled thereby. The wickedness of the Muḥammadans is their turning of their attention to their essences and infringing the rules governing the unity of the Essence.

[5:50] *Do they desire the judgement of paganism?*, meaning that what they desire by their ignorance is but a judgement issuing from the station of the soul and not issuing from divine knowledge.

[5:54] [*O you who believe*] *whoever of you apostatises*, whoever retreats from the path of the truth to the veiling of oneself with some veil, whatever that veil be, and withdraws from, he is from among the rejects, not from among the folk of love; nor is the religion of truth veiled or nullified by his apostasy. *For God will assuredly bring a people whom He loves*, in accordance with the first providence, not for any one reason, but for their essences, and [a people] who love His Essence, not for any one of His attributes, such as His being gentle, or merciful or gracious. For love of the attributes changes with the different self-disclosures of these [attributes]. The one who loves ‘the Gentle’, his love will not remain if He discloses Himself in the attribute of vanquishing; the one who loves ‘the Gracious’, his love will be effaced if He discloses Himself in the attribute of ‘the Vengeful’. As for love of the Essence, it remains by Its subsistence, and does not change with the different self-disclosures. Thus the one who loves It will love the Vanquisher upon the vanquishing, just as he will love the Gentle upon gentleness, and will love the Avenger at the point of [His] vengeance, and will love the Gracious upon [His bestowal of] a grace. Thus this [love] does not undergo any discrepancy either during [a state of] satisfaction or its absence. And the love of such [a person] does not differ according to his states, for he thanks Him during affliction just as he thanks Him during comfort; whereas the one who loves the Gracious does not thank Him during affliction, rather he exercises patience. Such a love entails the former [kind of] love, which is the one that is for God, on the part of His friends (*awliyā*), so that they love Him for His love of them, for otherwise whence their love of God? O what is dust before the Lord of all lords! *Humble [they are] towards believers*, gentle and tender with them, compassionate in their humility before them on account of the genus-compatibility of [their] essences, the interconnection [between them] of pre-eternal love and [their] mutual correspondence in terms of the primordial nature; *stern*, severe and harsh, *towards*, those who are veiled on account of the contrariety of those [aspects] mentioned, *struggling in the way of God*, by effacing their attributes and annihilating their essences which constitute the veils [preventing them] from their witnessings, *and fearing not the reproach of any reproacher*, who might impute to them antinomianism, atheism or disbelief or who might blame them for avoiding this world and its pleasures, nay for avoiding the Hereafter and its bliss, as the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, said, ‘Worship God neither in desire [of His reward] nor in fear [of His requital]’. Therefore they are the youth of whom it was said:

‘When the young man knows right-guidance for himself, the reproach of reproachers’.

[5:55] *Your patron is only God and His Messenger*, and those who are believers. The mutual incompatibility in reality between you [and the two mentioned] is of no consequence. In other words, God, His Messenger and the believers will be your guardians; or God and His friends from among the Messenger and the believers shall not be the patrons of those who are veiled because of the contrareity between them in reality. It is you, plural, who affiliate with God and His Messenger and the believers, first by affirming their affiliation with God in an absolute way, then by separating it outwardly. He says *and the Meessenger and the believers* in the same way that He did in regard to the testimony of the faith where He says *God bears witness that there is no god except Him [and the angels and those of knowledge]* [Q. 3:18]; *those who*, are believers, *establish*, the prayer of presential vision and the essential presence, *and pay the alms*, of the [untransformed] remnants, *bowing down*, submissive in their subsistence in God by ascribing their perfections and attributes to God — as is the case with the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him, regarding whom the following saying came down: ‘There is no god except God [even] after the annihilation of creatures’ — not established in the station of tyrannical insolence by ascribing these [perfections and attributes] to their own souls.

[5:56] *Whoever affiliates with God and His Messenger and the believers*, he is of the folk of God and verily the folk of God, *they shall have the victory*, of God.

[5:62] *And you see many of them vying*, that is, indulging in all manner of vices in earnest because of their habituation to them and their having been trained in them, and because they constitute natural traits of their souls. Sin is the vice of the rational-speech faculty because it is mendacity; enmity is the vice of the concupiscent faculty

[5:65] *But had the People of the Scripture believed*, [with] the faith of the true affirmation of the Oneness, *and feared*, and guarded against the idolatrous association of their acts, their attributes and their essences, *We would have absolved them of their evil deeds*, from among their remnants, *and We would admitted them to*, the three gardens.

[5:66] *And had they observed the Torah*, by ascertaining the exoteric aspects of knowledge [therein] and fulfilling the duties arising from the self-disclosures of the acts and observing their rules in transactions, *and the Gospel*, by ascertaining the esoteric signs and fulfilling the duties arising from the self-disclosures of the attributes and observing their rules, *and*, consolidated, *what was revealed to them*, of the knowledge of the origin and the final return as well as the affirmation of the unity of the kingdom and the spiritual realm of the world of lordship, which is the world of the [divine]

Names,<sup>68</sup> *they would surely have received nourishment from above them*, that is, they would surely have been provided from the higher spiritual world with divine forms of knowledge, rational realities of certainty and the gnoses of the Truth by which they are guided to knowledge of God and to knowledge of the angelic spiritual realm and the realm of divine power, *and from beneath their feet*, that is, [they would have also been provided] from the lower corporeal world with knowledge of the natural [physical] world and of sensory objects of perception by which they are guided to knowledge of the world of the kingdom and would come to know God by His exoteric and esoteric name, nay, by all of the names and attributes and would arrive at the station of the two mentioned affirmations of unity. *Some of them are a just community*, equitable, having arrived at the affirmation of the unity of the names and attributes, *but many of them*, have not arrived at the affirmation of the unity of the acts yet, let alone the affirmation of the unity of the attributes and thus their deeds are evil since they arise from the attributes of their souls, this being their densest veil.

[5:70] [*And We made a covenant with the Children of Israel*] *and We sent messengers to them*, in accordance with their [spiritual] levels. Thus when they were veiled from all aspects, We sent [them] Moses to remove the veil of the acts and to call [them] to proclaim the unity of the kingdom but their souls did not desire it, because his call was opposed to their caprices greedy as these are in their acts and because of their vaunting of these [acts of theirs] and of their pleasures and lusts. Thus they denied him and took to worshipping the calf of the soul and transgressed in the Sabbath and did what they did, until when he who would believe in him believed in him and emerged from the veil of the acts, but supposed that this was absolute perfection [that he had attained]. So We then sent Jesus to remove the veil of the attributes and to call to the esoteric and to the proclamation of the unity of the spiritual realm, but their souls did not desire it, because his call was opposed to their caprices supposing [to have attained] perfection. Thus they denied him and they did what they did until he who would believe in him believed and emerged from the veil of the attributes, but remained in that state supposing that his soul had attained absolute perfection. Then We sent Muḥammad to

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<sup>68</sup> The world of lordship (*rubūbiyya*) is the world of the Names since it is the realm that defines God's lordship over those 'lorded over', sc. creatures. The correlations between God's aspects and the objects of those aspects (such as His being knower through the fact that there are knowables etc.) define this realm of lordship, which can be known by the rational faculty. Even divinity (*ulūbiyya*) falls within the same principle, the exception being the Essence which cannot be known as it has no correlated term or counterpart as object (see discussion further below, Kāshānī's commentary to Q. 5:112).

remove the veil of the attributes and to call to the proclamation of the unity of the Essence, but their souls did not desire it and they denied him,

[5:71] *and they thought there would be no trial*, [no] idolatrous association upon the affirmation of the unity of the acts and the manifestation of the call of Jesus, *and so they were wilfully blind*, to the self-disclosures of the vision of the attributes, *and deaf*, to hearing the knowledge thereof. *Then God relented to them*, by opening up the audition-channels of their hearts and their eyes, and they repented and so He accepted their repentance; *then they were wilfully blind and deaf*, during the call of Muḥammad to the witnessing of the Abiding Face and to hearing the knowledge of the affirmation of the unity of the absolute union; *and God sees what they do*, at all three stations, including [their] rejection of the calls, [their] denial of the prophets and so He will requite them in accordance with their state.

[5:72] [*For the Messiah said, 'O Children of Israel] worship God, my Lord and your Lord*, that is to say, make your acts of worship specific to the Essence that is qualified by all of the attributes and names, that which constitutes absolute existence. Do not designate Him with any one name or attribute, for His Lordship is equally related to all [of these names and attributes]. Whoever restricts His divinity to any one form and specificities it by a particular name, word or attribute, has verily affirmed the existence of some other than Him, by the necessity of names, forms and attributes existing besides Him, and whoever affirms other than Him, has verily committed an idolatrous act of association with Him, and whoever has committed an idolatrous act of association with Him, *to him God has made forbidden*, the garden of the witnessing of Him through His essence, His attributes and His acts, namely, the absolute all-encompassing garden, in other words He has veiled him in an absolute way; *and his abode shall be*, the Fire of privation on account of the injustice which he committed by his act of idolatrous association, *and for wrongdoers there shall be no helpers*, to help them and save them from the chastisement.

[5:73] *They have indeed disbelieved*, [they have indeed] been veiled, *those who say, 'God is the third of three'*, [that He is] one thing comprising three things: the act, the exoteric aspect of the world of the kingdom; the attribute, which is the esoteric aspect of the world of the spiritual realm; and the essence, in which the attribute subsists and from which the act issues. But He is not that 'one' they have imagined. Rather the act and the attribute are in reality the essence itself and there is no distinction [between them] except in relative terms.<sup>69</sup> God is but the absolute One, for otherwise there would

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<sup>69</sup> In other words, if one might use one of either three to refer to the same concept, the divinity.



be a god for every one of His names and there would be a plurality of deities, glorified and exalted be He greatly above what the evildoers claim. *If they do not desist from what they say*, of the attribute and the act being other than the essence, those [of them] who are veiled, *shall suffer a chastisement*, that is painful because of their falling short in their knowledge of God despite their possessing the preparedness [for it].

[5:74] *Will they not turn in repentance to God*, by falling back from their affirmation of a plurality in God to the absolute source of the union and seek His forgiveness for the sin of inspecting their existence and the existence of others besides them; *God is Forgiving*, shielding them with His essence, *Merciful*, to them by [bestowing upon them] perfected knowledge [of Him] and affirmation of the Oneness.

[5:76] [*Say: 'Do you worship besides God' what cannot hurt or profit you?*, since that [which they worship besides Him] possesses no agency by which to hurt or profit, nay possessing no existence quite besides agency. He says *what besides God [cannot hurt or profit you]*, even though Jesus is what is meant, in order to point out that he [Jesus] can be considered as a thing [besides God] insofar as he is an entity, though he has no [independent] existence in reality.

[5:77] [*Say: 'O People of the Scripture' ... [do not follow the whims of a people] who went astray formerly*, by becoming veiled to the lights of the attributes, *and have led many astray, and strayed*, now, *from the even way'*, the path of the [inclusive] unity of the essence, which is to be upright before God.

[5:82] *You will truly find*, to the end [of the verse]. Friendship and enmity are [to be understood] in terms of correspondence and oppositeness. Whenever someone affiliates with another that is an indication of an interconnecting factor of genus between them, and whenever he displays enmity towards another that is an indication of discrepancy and contrareity between them. Since the Jews were veiled from the essence and the attributes and only engaged in the affirmation of the unity of the acts, their correspondence to the idolaters who are veiled absolutely was stronger than their correspondence to the believers who are affirmers of unity absolutely. As for the Christians, because when they emerged from the veil of the attributes they affiliated only to the veil of the essence, their correspondence to the believers was stronger, which is why they are nearer in love of them than others, while the idolaters and the Jews are the most hostile because of the intensity of their veiledness. Do you not see how He has explained the reason for their nearness in terms of their knowledge and worship [of God] and their lack of disdain. For worship leads to the garden of the acts in which they become disengaged from the acts of their souls, doing what God commands [of them]; and knowledge leads to the garden of the attributes, [knowledge] by which they

are exalted above the garden of the souls and [by which] they arrive at the station of the heart which is the locus for the [divine] unveiling. [Their] reception of divine knowledge and their lack of disdain are indications that they do not see their souls as qualified by the attributes of worship and knowledge; nor do they ascribe their acts and knowledge to them [their souls], rather to God, since otherwise they would be disdainful and would manifest pride;

[5:83] *you see their eyes overflow with tears*, in yearning for what they recognise of the affirmation of the unity of the essence, for they were folk who practiced spiritual discipline and [experienced] the tasting. Thus their souls were excited upon the hearing of the revelation and the mention of the unity; *because of what they recognise of the Truth*, by way of His attributes, or of what they heard of the Truth by way of His words and so they wept out of longing, as is said [by the poet]:

‘And he weeps yearning for them when they move afar; yet he [also] weeps when they come near for fear of separation’.

[*They say, ‘Our Lord we believe*, in the unity of [Your] essence, with an entified faith, so make us of, *the witnesses*, those who are present, whose station is the presential vision of the essence and the true certainty and the certain cognitive faith, so appoint us among the eyewitnesses.

[5:84] *And why should we not believe*, in His essence with a true faith and in what has come to us of His words, or not believe in God as all-comprehensive, *and what has come to us of the truth*, in differentiated mode; [*and hope that our Lord should admit us with the righteous people?’*, who have remained upright in the subsistence after [experiencing],

[5:85] *Gardens underneath which rivers flow*, in the way of the three self-disclosures<sup>70</sup> together with the knowledge of these [three]: *that is the requital of those who are virtuous*, who witness the unity at the source of multiplicity by their uprightness before God.

[5:86] *But those who*, have been veiled from the essence and, *disbelieve*, in the signs of the attributes — *they are the people*, of total privation in the Hell-fire of the attributes of the soul.

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<sup>70</sup> Kāshānī here places his commentary so that it connects different sections of the Qur’ānic narrative, whereas usually he either omits sections or uses a particular section independently. The three self-disclosures are of the essence, the attributes and the acts, each of which is associated with a garden.

[5:87] *O you who believe*, with a cognitive knowledge, *do not forbid the good things that God has made lawful for you*, of the unveilings of states and the self-disclosures of the attributes by falling short of your wayfaring, *and do not transgress*, by the insolence of the soul and the manifesting of itself through its attributes. Rather make God your shield for actualising those perfections by seeing them from Him and for His sake, not from you or for your sake, lest you then become insolent, if you are [truly] affirmers of [His] Oneness.<sup>71</sup>

[5:92] *And obey God*, by being annihilated in Him so that you become compliant in what He uses you for, as [compliant as] one who is dead; *and obey the Messenger*, by subsisting after the annihilation so that you become upright therein, mindful of the differentiations, alive through his life; *and beware*, of the manifestation of [your untransformed] remnants at the point of uprightness; *but if you turn away, then know*, that the shortcoming is yours and the Messenger's duty is only to proclaim openly [the message] and not to commit [you to it].

[5:93] *There shall be, upon those who believe*, with faith based on the unseen by the affirmation of the unity of the acts, *and who perform*, in accordance with what their faith entails, deeds that bring them out of the veils of the acts and set them right for the vision of the acts of the Truth, no fault or constraint in what they enjoy of different types of shares, so long as they avoid the remnants of their acts and take God as their shield against acts issuing from themselves, *and believe*, in the unity of the attributes, *and perform deeds*, that bring them out of the veils of the attributes and set them right for the witnessing of the divine self-disclosures by their effacement therein, *and then guard themselves*, against the remnants of their attributes and take God as their shield upon the issuing of His attributes upon them, *and believe*, in the unity of the essence, *then guard themselves*, the remnants of their essences and take God as their shield upon their existence through the pure annihilation and [their] consumption in the source of the essence and who are virtuous by witnessing the differentiations at the source of the union and by their uprightness at the subsistence after the annihilation; *for God loves the virtuous*, those who witness the unity at the source of multiplicity, who are mindful of the dues of the differentiations at the source of the union by means of the Truth-given existence.

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<sup>71</sup> The standard printed text of the commentary has *in kuntum*, 'if you are', as Qur'ānic narrative, glossed by Kāshānī's *muwāḥḥidīn*. However, there is no such phrase in any of the narratives in this section of the Qur'ān. The phrase has thus been rendered as though Kāshānī's own words.

[5:94] *O you who believe*, in the unseen, *God will surely try you*, at the point of your wayfaring and your entry into pilgrim sanctity for the visiting of the Ka'ba of arrival, *with something*, of the shares that come your way and by which you are given to consider that these are a means to arriving at this [Ka'ba of arrival], *so that God may know*, at the level of differentiated knowledge that is consequent to the event from which recompense ensues; *who fears Him*, in the state of absence, since fear (*khawf*) only applies in the case of those who believe in the unseen, as it is connected in the narrative that is addressing acts. As for the state of presence, then [what applies is] either reverential trepidation (*kbashya*),<sup>72</sup> in which case, by the self-disclosure of Lordship and Exaltedness, or awe (*hayba*), in which case, by the self-disclosure of the Essence. Thus fear is an attribute of the soul, reverential trepidation is an attribute of the heart, while awe is an attribute of the spirit. *Whoever transgresses thereafter*, by committing acts [entailing the enjoyment] of shares after the [divine] trying, *his shall be a chastisement*, that is painful for his veiling himself from [divine] love by his act.

[5:95] [*O you who believe*] *do not slay game*, do not indulge in ego-centric shares during the state of true pilgrim sanctity. Whoso indulges therein deliberately and intentionally by the inclining of some faculty of the soul and the attraction to that [inclination], not by chance or out of consideration for some passing inclination of a guest or a companion; *the compensation shall be*, that is, the judgement for that [unlawful indulgence] shall be a compensation of vanquishing that faculty, from among the soul's bestial faculties, through which he indulged in that ego-centric share by something that balances out that share, *to be judged by two just ones*, in the way of the two rationals, the considerative and the practical, *among you*, that is, from among your souls, or from among your elders or from among your companions that are foremost leaders who shall designate its modality and its quantity, *an offering to reach the*, true, *Ka'ba*, in other words, at the point of that bestial faculty becoming an offering through its annihilation in God, if the person offering it should be strong, self-sufficient and able. *Or, an expiation*, that is, a shielding [of that sin] by means of charity or fasting that will remove that inclination and conceal that configuration from his soul, or by fulfilling what is due to that faculty and being satisfied therewith without [indulging in] the share, for it [that faculty] is a poor thing; or by abstaining from the acts of that faculty in the measure of that share so that such an inclination disappears from it; *so that he may taste the evil consequence of his deed. God has pardoned what is past; but whoever*

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<sup>72</sup> Rāghib al-Iṣfahānī (fl. 5<sup>th</sup>/11<sup>th</sup> cent.) states that *kbashya* is fear that entails knowledge of the thing or person feared, which is why, he points out, this expression is used where God speaks of the reverential fear of those who have knowledge (*al-ʿulamāʾ*) [Q. 35:28]: see *Mufradāt*, s.v. *kb-sh-y*.

*offends again, God will take vengeance on him*, by means of veiling [him] and privation; *God is Mighty*: it is not possible to arrive at the gardens of His might bearing impurities of the attributes of the soul, *Lord of Retribution*, who veils by means of dark configurations, or the making manifest of an attribute [of the soul] or the existence of remnants, as He, exalted be He, said to His Prophet Muḥammad, blessings and peace by upon him: ‘Warn the truthful ones that I am a jealous one’.

[5:96] *Permitted to you is the hunting of the game*, of the sea of the spiritual world in the way of gnosés, intelligibles and cognitive shares amidst the celestial bodies of the divine presence, *and food from it*, in the way of profitable knowledge, the learning of which, for the purposes of transactions and for [the refinement of] character traits, is an obligatory duty, a means of enjoyment, *for you*, O wayfarers along the path of truth, *and for the travellers*, those journeying to the Hereafter, seeking to obtain the gains of the everlasting bliss; *but forbidden to you is the hunting of the game*, on the land of the corporeal world in the way of sensory objects and ego-centric shares. Take God as your shield in your journeying so that you might journey with Him. And make your souls God’s shield [for you] against the issuing from them of preventive evils, and be certain that, *to Him you shall be gathered*, at the annihilation in the Essence, so expend effort in wayfaring and do not stop because of the impediments behind the veil.

[5:97] *God has appointed*, the Ka’ba of the presence of the union, *the House*, that is forbidden to the entry into it of other [than God], as they say: ‘Majestic is the Truth’s Eminence above that It should serve as a watering-place for every water-seeker; *as a rising for mankind*, from their true death and a revivification for them thereby and by His life, His power and all of His attributes; *and the sacred month*, that is, the time of arrival, which is the time of the true pilgrimage in which the manifestation of the attributes of the soul is prohibited; *the offering*, that is, the soul sacrificially slaughtered in the courtyard of that Ka’ba, *and the garlands*, and especially the noble and obedient soul that is strong and compliant, for to seek nearness by means of such [a soul] is better and its status upon subsistence and the resurrection through the second existence and the true life shall be more exalted; *that*, in other words, appointing that presence as a rising for you, *is so that you may know*, by His knowledge upon your resurrection through it, *that God knows*, the realities of things in the world of the unseen and the witnessing, and that His knowledge encompasses all things; and since your knowledge cannot encompass His, then:

[5:98] *Know that God is severe in punishment*, by veiling the one who manifests himself through some attribute or remnant upon arrival, or alights there by mistake and occupies himself with other than the state of wayfaring, violating the sanctity of His

sacraments; [*God is*] *Forgiving*, of variegations and lapses, *Merciful*, in the configuration of perfections and felicities, the measure of which only He knows.

[5:99] *The duty of the Messenger is only*, to convey [the Message], not to effect conjunction, *and God knows*, your secrets and your outward acts, *what you reveal*, of deeds and character traits, *and what you hide*, of intentions, knowledge, and states, and whether these are good for you to seek nearness to Him therewith, and whether you are preparing therewith for the encounter with Him or not.

[5:100] *Say: 'The evil*, of souls, deeds, character traits and wealth, *and the good*, of them, *are not equal*, in the eyes of God, exalted be He, for good is accepted and brings about nearness and leads to arrival, whereas the evil of these is rejected [and leads] to distance, banishment and privation, *even though you should be attracted*, to the evil because of its abundance and availability, since it corresponds to the soul and suits its attributes. So take God as your shield for avoiding evil things and selecting what is good. O all you who possess a kernel, that is, an intellect that is pure of the blemishes of estimation and the admixture of the soul's caprice, *so that you might prosper*, by being delivered from your souls, their attributes and their evils, and by arriving at God through annihilation in Him,

[5:109] *on the day when God shall gather the messengers*, at the source of absolute union, or the source of the union of the Essence, *and He will say: 'What*, answer have your communities given to you when you summoned them to Me. In other words, 'Do you [messengers] have any insight into their [spiritual] levels with regard to the perfections to which they oriented themselves when they followed you?'; *they shall say, 'We have no knowledge*, that is, all knowledge belongs to You, comprehensively and in differentiation, and none other than You has any knowledge, because our attributes have been annihilated in Your attributes. *You, only You, are the Knower of things unseen'*, and so the unseens of our innermost aspects and their innermost aspects all constitute knowledge that is Yours.

[5:110] [*When God said, 'O Jesus, son of Mary, remember*] *My favour to you*, in the way of special guidance and the station of prophethood and sanctity through [divine] friendship (*walāya*), *and to your mother*, in terms of purification, cleansing and election, [*when I strengthened you with the Holy Spirit*] *such that you spoke to people*, in the cradle of the body, *and in maturity*, attaining the light of the grey hairs of perfection by the disengaging from the body and its garments, *and when I taught you*, the scripture of realities and gnoses that are fixed in the Preserved Tablet by means of reinforcing [you] with the Holy Spirit and the wisdom of [the method of] wayfaring to God by the actualisation of [virtuous] character traits, states, stations, outer disengagement and

inner solitude; and [taught you] the Torah of the exoteric forms of knowledge, judgements concerned with acts and the states of the soul and its attributes, as well as the Gospel of the esoteric forms of knowledge in the way of the knowledge of the self-disclosures of the attributes and the rules governing them, and the judgements concerning the states of the heart, its attributes and its deeds; *and how you create*, out of the clay of the intellect of primordial matter, which is the pure preparedness, by the hand of nurture and practical wisdom, *the likeness of*, the bird of the heart that flies to the Holy Presence because of its disengagement from its world and [because of] its perfection, *by My permission*, that is, by My knowledge, My power and My facilitation upon the self-disclosure to you of My attributes of life, knowledge, and power, and [My] vindicating you and calling you to prophethood, *and you breathe into it*, from the spirit of perfection the life of true knowledge by perfecting [it] and [by] correlation, *and it becomes a bird*, a perfect disengaged soul flying off to the Holy Side by the wings of love; *and you heal the blind*, the one veiled from the light of the Truth, *and the leper*, the one blemished by the sickness of the love of this world and the overpowering of caprice; *and you raise*, those dead by ignorance from the graves of the body and the earth of the soul, *by My permission; and how I restrained the Children of Israel*, those veiled from the light of the self-disclosures of the attributes, the ignorant who are opposed to you because of their ignorance of your state and station, *from you, when you brought them clear signs*, definitive arguments and clear proofs, *and those who*, were veiled, *among them*, from the religion of truth, *said, "This is nothing but manifest sorcery"*, because of their bewilderment regarding it.

[5:111] *And when I revealed to the disciples*, that is, [when] I inspired into their hearts, those luminous ones who had cleansed their souls with the water of beneficial things and purgative deeds, until they accepted your call, due to the purity of their souls, and loved you with complete volition, due to their correspondence to you in terms of the light of [their] primordial nature and the purity of [their] preparedness: *"Believe in Me*, with a true faith, by affirming the unity of the attributes and [by] effacement, *and in My Messenger"*, by being mindful of the dues of the self-disclosures of these [attributes] at the level of differentiation; *they said, "We believe; bear witness*, O God of ours, by Your all-inclusive knowledge that encompasses all things, that we are obedient to You, submitting the existences of our attributes to You.

[5:112] *When the disciples said*, when your companions made a request of you, saying: *is your Lord able*, that is, [is] your witness from the world of Lordship [able] — for the lord of each person is the name that nurtures him and perfects him. Every person worships only what he knows of the world of Lordship and he knows only what he has

attained of [an understanding of] the levels of the divinity,<sup>73</sup> drawing therefrom an effusion of knowledge and drawing down therefrom blessings and draws therefrom spiritual reinforcement, which is why, despite their affirmation and their submission, they said ‘your Lord’ and not ‘our Lord’, since ‘their Lord’ is not able, *to send down on us a Table from the heaven?*’, a law from the heaven of the world of the spirit that subsumes various types of knowledge, wisdoms, gnoses and judgements, wherein is nourishment for the heart and nutrition for the soul, its life and its tastings. *He said: ‘Fear God*, beware of Him lest the attributes of your souls manifest themselves, and take Him as your shield with regard to the character traits and acts that issue from you, so that you are delivered from the [evil] consequences of these, are victorious and prosper, for if your faith is realised, you have no need of any new law.

[5:113] *They said, ‘We desire*, to profit, *from it*, and to implement it and draw strength from it, *and that our hearts be reassured*, because knowledge is the nourishment of the heart and its source of nutrition, *and that we may know*, your truthfulness in what you inform of your Lord, your prophethood and your authority therein and thereby, *and that we may be among the witnesses thereof*’, who are present, possessors of knowledge, to inform others who are absent about it, to teach them and to call them to God by it.

[5:114] *that it shall be a celebration for us for the first and the last of us*, by command, that is, [that it shall be] a law and a religion referred to in celebration by those in our times from among our correlative and by those after us who will be from among the Christians, *and a sign from You*, a token and a knowledge from You by which You might be known and worshipped. *And provide for us*, that law and beneficial knowledge and guidance, *You are the Best of Providers*’, providing [us] only with what benefits us and in which our best interest resides.

[5:115] *but whoever disbelieves*, [whoever] is veiled from this religion after it is sent down and has become clear, *I shall surely chastise him with a chastisement wherewith I chastise no other being from among all the worlds*’, by virtue of the path having become clear and the religion and proof having been clarified and their preparedness existing, so that when they deny it they are doing so only out of obstinacy. Chastisement in the case of knowledge is more intense than chastisement in the case of ignorance, since the

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<sup>73</sup> Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussions of the Essence and the Divinity point out that it is through the divinity that God can be, and indeed is, known, since the Essence is unknowable and is what makes God absolutely transcendent. Put differently, for every aspect, or name, of God there is a correlated object: God is powerful, knower etc. through the correlated objects of this power and this knowledge. Just as there is divinity, there is the object of divinity (*ma’lūb*, ‘divine thrall’). Only the Essence is outside this principle, since It is the God-Entity Itself (Chittick, 1989: 59ff).



sensing of the fact that one is veiled from that [truth] necessitates a severe painfulness [in the chastisement].

[5:116] [*O Jesus, son of Mary*] *did you*, call people to [worship of] yourself or your mother, or [it means: did you call people] to the station of your heart and your soul. For the one in whom there remains the existence of egoism and the remnants of the soul and caprice, or in whom there is variegation by the existence of the heart and its manifestation in its attribute will call creatures either to the station of his soul or to the station of his heart, and not to the truth. *He [Jesus] says, 'Glory be to You!'*: an affirmation of the exaltedness of God above [that He should have] partnership and an absolution for him [Jesus] of the existence of any remnants [in him]. *It is not mine to say what I have no right to*, since I possess no existence in reality and as such it is not mine nor is it right that I should say something that I am not entitled to in reality, as statements, acts, attributes and existence all belong to You [alone]. *If I indeed had said it, You would have known it*, that is to say, had there issued from me any [such] statement then it would have been by Your knowledge, but there is no existence for that which You do not have knowledge of and there exists only what exists by Your knowledge. *You know what is in my soul*, encompassing as You do all things and so my knowledge is but a part of Your knowledge; *but I do not know what is within Your Self*, that is, Your Essence as I do not encompass all things [in my knowledge].

[5:117] *I only said to them*, and I only commanded them that which You have charged me with saying and which you have obliged me to [say]: "*Worship God, my Lord and your Lord*". In other words, I only called them to the union in the form of differentiation, the relationship of whose lordliness to all is equal. But they fell into error and saw that [lordliness] in only some of the differentiations because of the narrowness of their [spiritual] receptacles. *And I was a witness over them*, a watcher, present, looking after them and teaching them, *whilst I was amongst them*, that is, while there remained in me the existence of some remnant, *but when You took me [to You]*, [but when] You annihilated me totally in You, *You were Yourself the Watcher over them*, given my having been annihilated in You, *and You Yourself are Witness over all things*, [You are] present; through You a thing comes into existence, for otherwise that thing would not be.

[5:118] *If You chastise them*, by maintaining the veil [over them] forever, *verily they are Your servants*, deserving of the veil and of privation. You are most entitled to dealing with them as You wish, *and if You forgive them*, by removing the veil, *You, only You, are the Mighty*, the Powerful One able to do that and Whose might is not compromised by bringing them near or by the removal of their veil, *the Wise*', exacting what You

exact in the way of chastisement through veiling and privation, or drawing [them] near [to You] through gentleness and forgiveness by Your absolute wisdom.

[5:119] [*God says*] ‘*This is the day*, when your truthfulness shall profit you and the truthfulness of every truthful person [shall also profit him], constituting as this [truthfulness] does the ferment of perfections and the specific quality of the spiritual realm. *Theirs will be the Gardens*, of the attributes the token of which is the fruit of satisfaction, for satisfaction can only be after the annihilation of will and their will can only be annihilated after theirs are overcome by God’s will which then annihilates theirs. That is why God’s being satisfied with them is mentioned before their being satisfied with Him. In other words, since God, exalted be He, willed that they be pre-ternally in the manifestation-locus of His will and in the locus of His satisfaction, being satisfied with them in terms of locus and as deserving of that [locus], He strips them of their will by appointing His will in its place, giving It to them in place of theirs, so that He is satisfied with them and has satisfied them — *that is the great triumph*’, that is, the prospering that has an awesome status. Had it been the annihilation of the essence [meant here], this would have been the greatest triumph and the most awesome prospering.

[5:120] To Him belongs what is in the upper world and in the lower world, both in its exoteric and its esoteric aspect; *and all that is in them*: His names, His attributes and His acts, *and He has power over all things*, if He should desire it, He annihilates by the manifesting of His essence, or if He should desire He brings into existence by concealing Himself in His names and attributes.

## [6] al-An‘ām

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[6:1] *Praise be to God Who created the heavens and the earth*: the manifestation of perfections and the attributes of the Beauty and the Majesty in the loci of the differentiations of existents in their entirety — which is the universal perfection and the nondelimited praise — is specific to the All-comprehensive Divine Essence that combines all of Its attributes and names, in view of the origins, [the Essence] which brought into existence the heavens of the world of spirits and the earth of the world of body, and originated in the world of the body the darknesses of its [various] levels, which [levels] are veils of darkness [that veil] from His Essence, and [originated] in the world of the spirits the light of knowledge and perception; *then*, that is, after the manifestation of these signs [of His], *those who disbelieve*, those who are veiled absolutely, *ascribe as equals to their Lord*, other than Him, affirming [the existence of] an existent that is equal to Him with respect to existence.

[6:2] *It is He Who created you from clay*, primordial matter, *then He decreed a term*, non-delimited, not designated by any time or configuration, because the establishing of the fixed [divine] decree, which is the mother book, is a universality that transcends time, ever above individualised entities, since its locus is the first spirit that is sanctified above attachment to locus; and thus this [term] is the term which preparedness requires by nature as per its ipseity, that which is called the natural term in consideration of that same special constitution and the specific composition, without consideration of any temporal accidents; *and a term stated*, specified, *with Him*, that is the predetermined temporal term which comes to pass necessarily when the preconditions obtain and impediments are removed, and which is established in the Book of the soul of the celestial sphere, that is, the Tablet of Destiny that is joined to, and a concomitant of, a designated time, as God says *when their term comes they shall not delay it a single hour nor bring it forward* [Q. 7:34]; *yet thereafter*, after you have known His power to originate you and to annihilate you, and that His knowledge encompasses you, you are in doubt with regard to Him and His power, and thus you affirm effect and power for other than Him.

[6:3] *And He is God*, in the form of the All, His divinity is the same both in the upper world and the lower one; *He knows your secrets*, in the world of spirits, which is the world of the unseen; *and your utterance*, in the world of bodies, which is the world of witness, *and He knows what you earn*, in both [worlds], in the way of forms of

knowledge, beliefs, states, motions, stillnesses, and deeds, the moral and the corrupt ones, the sound and the erroneous, as well as the good and the evil ones, and He will thus recompense you accordingly.

[6:9] *And had We appointed him*, [Muḥammad] the Messenger, *an angel*, *We would assuredly have made him a man*, that is to say, We would have given him corporeal form, because an angel is light which is imperceptible to vision; they<sup>74</sup> are a folk [aware only] of externals and are unable to perceive anything except what is sensory. But every sensory thing is either a body or a corporeal form. There is no form that corresponds to an angel who utters the truth such that he might be able to assume it physically, except for the human form, either because he should be a rational-speaking soul which would require such a form, or because of the necessary existence of genus-correspondence without which they would not be able to hear or receive speech from him.

[6:12] *[God] He has prescribed for Himself mercy*, that is to say, He has obligated His essence to it in the sense that it [mercy] is the effusion of goodness and perfection in a manner commensurate with the preparedness [for it] of the recipient entities. Thus there is not a single individual deserving [by virtue of his preparedness] of the mercy of existence or perfection but is granted it upon his deservingness being actualised. *He will surely gather you together on the Day of*, the minor, *Resurrection*, and the restoration, or the major one,<sup>75</sup> at the source of the nondelimited union, *of which there is no doubt*: [there is no doubt] in either of the two gatherings, in the same matter upon verification, even if those who are veiled are not aware of it, being: *those who have forfeited their souls*, by leading them to destruction by [their indulgence of] lusts, transient pleasures and the love of what is quick to perish in the way of the ephemera of this world. A person will be gathered [to the resurrection] with whatever constitutes his object of love. Thus such [individuals] by their love of those [things] and their being veiled by them are blind to the enduring luminous realities, taking in place of them dark and evanescent sensory objects; *they do not believe*.

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<sup>74</sup> They being those addressed by the verse, the Meccan unbelievers in historical terms, but all who are spiritually deficient in terms of this commentary.

<sup>75</sup> According to Kāshānī's *Kitāb Iṣṭilāḥāt al-Ṣūfiyya* (s.v. *qiyāma*): 'Resurrection into eternal life after death may be divided into three types. The first is the resurrection, following physical death, into a life within either the higher or the lower Intermediate Worlds, depending on the state of the dead person during life on earth [...] [t]his is the Minor Resurrection [...] The second is the resurrection, after voluntary death, into the eternal life of the Heart of in the Holy world [...] This is the Immediate Resurrection [...] The third is the resurrection, after annihilation in God, into the life of reality, whilst enduring within Truth. This is the Major Resurrection': tr. Nabil Safwat, *A Glossary of Sufi Technical Terms*. London: Octagon Press, 1991, 98.

[6:14] *Say: 'I have been commanded to be the first to submit:* He says this even as He says *Then We revealed to you [saying]: 'Follow the creed of Abraham, a ḥanīf, and he was not of the idolaters'* [Q. 16:123], and likewise where Moses says *'Glory be to You! I repent to You and I am the first of the believers'* [Q. 7:143], because the levels of spirits differ in proximity to and distance from the divine ipseity; and every individual who is more distant, his faith is effected through the medium of the one who is ahead of him in level. The people of the unity are all at the divine level, the people of the foremost rank, whose faith is without mediation, whereas the faith of all others is through the mediation of these [foremost] ones, for each who is ahead [from among the former there is the mediation of] one who is ahead [from among the foremost rank]. Every individual whose faith involves no mediation becomes 'the first of the believers', even if his existence comes later in terms of time, as the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'We are the later one and those who are the first'. Thus his following of the creed of Abraham does not detract of his [Muḥammad's] precedence, because the meaning of 'following' is to journey along the path of the affirmation of Oneness as in his journeying in the first epoch, and the meaning of his being of the first is his being among the foremost rank with those who have preceded.

[6:18] *And He is the Vanquisher over His servants,* by His annihilation of their essences, attributes and acts by His essence, attributes and acts, such that His vanquishing power is in effect the very source of His graciousness (*lutf*), just as He was gracious to them by bringing them into existence, granting the capacity and the power to partake of different kinds of enjoyments and prepared for them what they wanted of different kinds of graces and desires of the appetite by which they were veiled from Him: that is His very vanquishing. Glory then be to the One whose mercy embraces His friends even with the intensity of His retribution and whose retribution is severe against His enemies while His mercy is all-embracing; *and He is the Wise,* who does what He does in terms of outward vanquishing that entails all-embracing graciousness within, or [who does what He does] in terms of outward graciousness that entails total vanquishing within by His wisdom; *the Aware,* the One who has knowledge of the hidden aspects of their states and the deservingness of these of grace or vanquishing.

[6:21] *And who does greater evil than he who invents a lie against God,* by affirming the existence of any other than Him, *or denies,* His attributes by manifesting the attributes of his own soul and thus commits idolatrous association with Him, when the utmost in evil-doing is to associate [others] with God. *They the evildoers shall not prosper,* because of their being veiled by what they have placed in the place of God's essence and attributes.

[6:22] *And on the day We shall gather them all together*, at the source of the union of the Essence, *then We shall say to those who associated [others] with God*, by affirming [the existence of] others: *'Where are those associates of yours whom you were claiming?'*, for the universal annihilation in the self-disclosure of the Essence.

[6:23] *Then*, upon the self-disclosure of the state and the issuing forth of all before the Vanquishing King, the ultimate in their idolatrous association and its consequence, *was only to say, 'By God, our Lord we were never idolaters'*, because of the impossibility of anything existing with which to associate God.

[6:24] *See how they lie to their souls*, by falsely ascribing existence and attributes to these [souls], *and how that which they were forging has failed them!*, such that they do not find it to be anything, rather they found it to be nothing except the forgery [itself]; or [it means] that they lied to their own souls by denying their idolatrous association, despite the firm-rootedness of that tendency in them.

[6:27] *If you could see when they are made to stand before*, the fire of privation and the torture of the configurations of their dark souls and the mastery that forms of forged things have acquired over them in chastisement; *and they say, 'Oh if only we might be returned and not deny the signs of our Lord*, such as the self-disclosures of His attributes, *and be among the believers!'*, who are affirmers of the Oneness, then [our situation] would be what cannot be described.

[6:28] *Nay it has now become evident*, manifest, *to them that which they used to conceal*, in the way of corrupt beliefs, ruinous attributes and dark configurations because of their issuing forth before God and the inversion of their inner aspect into an outer one such that they are chastised thereby; *and even if they were returned, they would return to that which they are forbidden*, because of the firm-rootedness of these [corrupt] beliefs and traits in them; *they are truly liars*, in this world and in the Hereafter, for mendacity is a trait firmly rooted in them.

[6:30] *If you could see when they are made to stand before their Lord*, at the major resurrection, and this [that follows] is an imagined representation of their state in terms of their veiledness and distance, for otherwise there would be no words and no response at that [moment] because of their being deprived from the presence and the witnessing, even though they might be at the source of nondelimited union. Know that 'to stand before' (*waqafa 'alā*) something is different from 'to stand with' (*waqafa ma'a*) it, for to stand with something is voluntary and willingly done, whereas to stand before something can only be by coercion or out of aversion. Thus the one who stands with God in [his] affirmation of Oneness — like the one who said, 'Desire stands whence

you [stand] and I can neither walk behind it nor ahead [of it]' — will not be made to stand for the reckoning. Rather he will be among those of the greatest prize of whom He says: *and restrain yourself along with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening, desiring His countenance* [Q. 18:28]; *you are not accountable for them in anything* [Q. 6:52];<sup>76</sup> and he will be rewarded by all kinds of bliss in all of the gardens. As for the one who stands with the other through idolatrous association, he will stand before the Lord and will be chastised with all manner of chastisement in the [various] levels of all the fires, because of his veil being denser and his unbelief greater. As for the one who stands with the human realm (*nāsūt*) by his love of pleasures and desires and lingers in the veil of the vestiges [thereof], he will stand before the spiritual realm (*malakūt*) and chastised with the fires of privation from what is desired and unleashed on him shall be the Zabāniya angels [cf. Q. 96:18] of [his] dark configurations and he will be bounded together with the devils of [his] ruinous caprices. As for the one who stands with the acts, having emerged from the veil of the vestiges, he will stand before the realm of divine power (*jabarūt*) and will be chastised with the fire of ambition and hope and is returned to the station of the spiritual realm (*malakūt*). As for the one who stands with the attributes, having emerged from the veil of the acts, he will stand before the Essence and is chastised with the fire of yearning in abandonment, even if he should be of the folk of [divine] satisfaction; but this standing is not the standing before the Lord, for the one who is made to stand before the Essence knows his Lord as qualified by the attributes of graciousness, such as the Merciful, the Tender, and the Generous, unlike the one who is made to stand before the Lord; and this is thus the veil of the ego, just as the one who stands with the acts is in the veil of His descriptions, and the one who stands with the human realm is in the veil of His acts which belong to the totality of vestiges. The idolater is made to stand therefore before all four standings: firstly, before the Lord where he is veiled through distance and banishment, as He says *Begone in it despicably and do not speak to Me* [Q. 23:108] and [where] He says *Then taste the chastisement for that you disbelieved* [Q. 6:30]; then [secondly], before the realm of divine power (*jabarūt*) where he is banished with wrath and vanquishing, as He says *and God shall not speak to them on the Day of Resurrection nor look upon them* [Q. 3:77]; then [thirdly], before the spiritual realm where he is rebuked with anger and being cursed as is said [by God] *Enter the gates of Hell* [Q. 40:76]; then [fourthly], before the Fire where

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<sup>76</sup> Kāshānī here means to recite the entirety of Q. 6:52, and this is certain from the lack of any conjunction between the two verses in the Arabic. He inadvertently cites Q. 18:28 which has similar wording but begins with 'and restrain yourself with those who call ...', whereas Q. 6:52 has 'and do not drive away those who call ...'

he is chastised with all kinds of fires forever, as He says by the tongue of [the Hell-keeper angel] Mālik [Nay] *you will surely remain* [Q. 43:77]. Thus his standing before the Fire comes after his standing before the Lord, receiving its justification from it, as He says *then to Us is their return; then We shall make them taste terrible chastisement for what they used to disbelieve in* [Q. 10:70]. As for the one who stands with the human realm, he will stand for the reckoning before the spiritual realm then before the Fire but may be turned away [from it] if [divine] wrath is non-existent, or may not be turned away if it is existent. As for the one who stands with the acts, he is not made to stand before the Fire in the first place, rather he is reckoned with [promptly] and is admitted into the Garden. As for the one who stands with the attributes, he will be among those with whom God is satisfied and who are satisfied with Him. But God knows best the realities of matters.

[6:31] *They indeed are losers who*, are veiled, who are deniers of the encounter with the Truth, *until when*, the minor resurrection, *comes upon them*, they are remorseful for being remiss about it, *and they shall be bearing their loads*, in the way of the burdens of attachment [to the material] and the acts arising from the love of corporeal things, as well as the evil consequences of misdeeds and the sins arising from the configurations of sensory things, *on their backs*: in other words, these [burdens] shall mount them and assume mastery over them, firmly rooted as these are in their souls, veiling them, causing them [to suffer] chastisement and impeding them from what they desire.

[6:32] *The life of this world*, that is, the sensory life — since what is sensory is closer to creatures than what is intelligible — *is nothing but a game*, nothing but something without foundation or reality, quick to perish and become extinct; *surely the abode of the Hereafter*, that is, the world of spiritual beings, *is better for those who*, disengage from the vestments of the attributes of mortals and corporeal pleasures. *What, do you not understand?*, so as to prefer the nobler, the more wholesome to the viler, the lowlier that is perishing.

[6:33] *We know indeed that it grieves you*: this is a reprimand to the Messenger of God for the manifestation of his soul by means of grief; *they do not deny you*, to the end [of the verse]: that is, their denial is not a denial of you, since in this summoning you do not subsist by means of your own soul, nor is this speech an attribute of yours. Rather you summon them by means of God and His attributes: this is an established habit [of God].

[6:34] *Messengers indeed have been denied before you; yet they endured patiently*, through God. He has given him solace through Himself after reprimanding him, lest he subsist within the variegation and so that he might not be sorry after it has departed from him



and end up in [a state of] constriction, but rather so that his heart might be reassured, which is why He follows that with His words: *There is none to change the words of God*, that is, the attributes of God by which He discloses Himself to His servants. These are not replaced, nor are they changed by the denial of the deniers; nor are these [deniers] able to change [His attributes]. He then denies him any power and declares him as incapable with His words:

[6:35] *And if their aversion is grievous for you, then, if you can*, to the end [of the verse] is lest that his soul should manifest itself by means of its attributes. *So do not be among the ignorant*, who are unaware of the wisdom [inherent] in the discrepancy between preparednesses, and then be sorry about the veiledness of those who are veiled. For the divine will has decreed that some be guided and some be deprived because of the wisdom with which the [spiritual] system is organised and [because of] the manifestation of outer and inner perfections. So the only ones to respond [to God] are those the auditory channels of whose hearts God has opened by means of primordial guidance (*hidāya aṣliyya*) and on whom He has bestowed true life by means of the attributes of preparedness and the light of primordial nature. Not the dead of ignorance [is it who respond to God], whose natural instincts are dead by means of composite ignorance or by means of the veils of innate disposition, or who did not possess any preparedness in accordance with primordial nature. Such are unable to hear, rather:

[6:36] *God will resurrect them*, through restoration at the second creation, *and then to Him they will be returned*, at the source of nondelimited union for the recompense or reward, despite their veiledness. It is possible the veils are removed in the Hereafter for the latter group exceptionally from among all of the rest.

[6:37] [*And they say, 'Why has a sign not been sent down to him from his Lord?' Say, 'Surely God has the power to send down a sign'*] *but most of them have no knowledge*: about the sending down of signs. For the manifestation of each one of His attributes in every one of the loci of engendered beings is a sign of Him by which those who have knowledge are able to know Him.

[6:38] *There is no animal on the earth*, to the end [of the verse], but can undergo transfiguration (*maskh*), being communities like you in terms of veiledness, enmity, and the commission of vices, such as the people of the [breaking of the] Sabbath, who were transfigured into apes and swine. *We have not neglected*, We have not diminished [anything] of their Book which contains the forms of their deeds, which is the scroll of the soul of the celestial sphere, or the scroll of their intention in which the forms of their deeds are fixed; *then to their Lord they shall be gathered*, for the recompense, veiled at the source of the nondelimited union. Manifestly it seems that what is meant [here]

is that they are communities like you under the care of a Lord in terms of what they need in the way of their [sources of] livelihood, with their provisions sufficiently taken care of by a measure determined by God and [by] His wisdoms. We have not left out anything from the Book of the Preserved Tablet that might benefit them; rather We have fixed therein their provisions, terms of life, deeds and everything which they might need; then to their Lord they shall be gathered to be recompensed for their deeds, as related in a *ḥadīth* about the gathering of beasts and the mutual retaliation between them for deeds [committed in this life], every one of which is a sign for you [a sign] by which your states, your provisions, your terms of life and your deeds can be known. Heed these [signs] then and do not expend your resolves (*himam*) and your efforts in the pursuit of provision or to rectify the affairs of the life of this world and then end up forsaking your souls, harming them and being wretched because of them in the Hereafter.

[6:39] *And those who deny*, the self-disclosures of Our attributes, because of their being veiled by the coverings of the attributes of their souls; *are deaf*, in the ears of their hearts and thus do not hear the words of truth, *and dumb*, in the tongues of these [hearts], which constitute their intellects and so they cannot speak the truth in the darknesses of the attributes of their souls and the cloaks of their bodies and the coverings of their natural traits, like animals: how then are they to affirm your truthfulness when God has not through His facilitation guided them thereto? *He whom God wills, He sends astray*, by letting the veils of His Majesty hang down, *and whom He wills, He sets him on a straight path*, by allowing for the irradiation of the light of His face and the august glories of His beauty.

[6:40] *Say, 'Do you see yourselves*, to the end [of the verse]: in other words, every committer of idolatrous association when he ends up in the chastisement or at the moment of death — if we interpret 'the Hour' as meaning the minor resurrection — or [when] the veil is removed as a result of being guided by the Truth to the true affirmation of Oneness — if we interpret it as meaning the major resurrection — [that idolater] he will dissociate from [claims made of] the power and strength of that which he associated with God and will ascertain that there is no power or strength except in God. And he will call only upon God and will forget all the agents to whom he was attached and whom he associated with God, which is why it is said that affliction is one of God's scourges by which He drives His servants. Do you not see how He follows these words of His by comparing them to the seizing with misery and hardship after the sending of messengers, that perhaps the doubling of the causes of graciousness such as the leadership of prophets and the driving [of them] through punishment might stir

them from the established abodes of their souls and break their vehemence and the severity of their contemptuousness, that such a person might become obedient and emerge from the veil, and that they might then comply humbly upon the self-disclosure of the attribute of vanquishing and its impact upon them. Then He makes it clear that the reason why they did not humble themselves is because of the hardness of their hearts as a result of the density of their veil and being overpowered by the deceit of caprice and the love of this world and the inclination to corporeal pleasures.

[6:51] *And warn therewith those who fear*, that is to say, warn with what has been revealed to you the prepared ones who are the folk of fear and hope, and turn away from those whose hearts have hardened for it [the warning] brings no results with them, as He said at the beginning of the Book [that It is] *a guidance for the God-fearing* [Q. 2:2], *that they shall be gathered to their Lord: apart from Him they have no protector and no intercessor*, so that they know through the purity of their preparedness that the return to God is inevitable, that they might fear to be gathered before Him in a state in which they are veiled from Him by the veils of their attributes and acts, with no protector other than God to assist them and deliver them from the humiliation of remoteness and the chastisement of privation and no intercessor to intercede for them and bring them near to Him and bestow dignity on them, because all essences and powers are annihilated in God and [in] His vanquishing of them, as He says *the day when they will emerge nothing about them will be hidden from God. 'To whom does sovereignty belong today?' 'To God, the One, the Vanquisher'* [Q. 40:16]; and that they might be admonished by listening to it [sc. the revelation] so that there arises in them hope [for salvation] and they then embark upon the wayfaring in earnest and with industry, *so that they might be wary*, that they might be wary of the veils of their acts, their attributes and their essences and disengage from these through effacement and annihilation in God. It would be correct [to understand] that the protector [here] is the heart and the intercessor the spirit, in other words, that they have not yet arrived at the station of the heart, which is the protector of the soul that delivers it from chastisement and assist it against privation, nor [have they arrived] at the station of the spirit that it might intercede for them by reinforcing [the soul] with the support of propinquity, deriving its strength from God, and [by] acting as a means between them and God.

[6:52] *And do not banish those who call*, that is, do not drive them away with this [revelation] while they are the folk of the unity, the perfect ones who have arrived, for warning, just as it is of no use with those whose hearts have hardened, is also of no benefit in the case of those whose hearts are fickle and dispersed with regard to God, *upon their Lord at morning and evening*, that is, always designating [their] worship

exclusively for Him through presence of the heart and the presential vision of the spirit and the directing of [their] innermost secret to Him. They desire nothing but His essence in [their] worship by means of pre-eternal love. They do not justify their worship on the basis of some goal such as the expectation of the reward of the Garden or the fear of punishment or retribution; nor do they desire Him through the love of the attributes such that their desires change with the different self-disclosures of these [attributes]; nor do they deem it licit to make His essence an intermediary to [the actualisation of] some goal or pursuit. Rather, they have witnessed the annihilation of all means and intermediaries in Him and in their presential vision there remains nothing for them to cast their eyes upon, not even their essences; ***you are not accountable for them***, in anything that they do, in other words, there is no mediator between them and their Lord in the way of a king or a prophet. Thus it is of no use for you to call them to obedience or to [spiritual] struggle or otherwise: their reckoning then is up to God, as their deeds are only [done] through God and in God; ***nor are they accountable for you in anything***, that is to say, they do not involve themselves in the affairs of your mission [either] by supporting or assisting Islam, nor by averting or curbing disbelief, preoccupied as they are with the God to the exclusion of others and by the permanence of their presence, as He says *and those who maintain their prayers* [Q. 70:23], unconcerned with any affair relating to your or to your prophethood, ***that you should drive them away***, from what they are upon in terms of the permanence of their presence by inciting them to some task relating to religion, or some welfare, or by disturbing their [spiritual] moment and their concentration (*jam'iyya*), ***and be of the evildoers***.

[6:53] ***And even so We have tried***, that is, with the like of such tremendous trial and affliction, We have tried, ***some of them***, who are the veiled, by others, for those who are veiled, seeing from those [others] nothing but their form and their evil state outwardly as well as their poverty and need and not seeing their worth and their [spiritual] level and their goodly state inwardly, despise them and their eyes scorn them with regard to what they enjoy of wealth, repute, comfort and an easy life, and so they say [the following] about them: ***'Are these the ones whom God has favoured from among us?'***, with guidance, sarcastically, when by God these they are the ones whose living is the most wholesome, their state and their waystation the most exalted and their measure and level the most magnificent before God and before those who know them, as Noah, peace be upon him, said *Nor do I say to those whom your eyes scorn that God will not give them any good* [Q. 11:31]: nay indeed, good and nothing but good is what God has given them. ***Is God not best aware of those who are thankful?***, who are thankful to Him

in reality by employing the grace of their existence, their attributes and their limbs and what He sustains them with in the way of provisions and sources of livelihood in acts of obedience to God. Thus they give thanks to Him in return for the outward grace by worshipping [Him] and conceptualising this [grace] as issuing from the Gracious One and expending it in acts that are pleasing to God; and in return for the grace of [having] limbs [they give thanks to Him] by using these [limbs] to worship Him and to wayfare upon His path, to actualise knowledge of Him and to know His attributes; and in return for the grace of attributes [they thank Him] by effacing them in God and by admitting their inability to [truly] know Him, thank Him and worship Him; and in return for the grace of existence [they thank Him] by means of annihilation in the source of presential vision such that God shows His appreciation of their effort by means of [granting them] existence bestowed from [His Name] the Truth and teaches them that He is the Appreciative One who is thanked for Himself by means of Himself, and that none except Him is able to [truly] thank Him. Hence they say, ‘Glory be to You: we have not come to know You in the way You truly deserve. Glory be to You: we have not worshipped You as You truly deserve to be worshipped’. That is His knowledge of their gratitude and His recompense [of it] from Him.

[6:54] *And when those who believe in Our signs*, by effacing their attributes, *come to you, say, ‘Peace be upon you*, for exalting yourselves above the faults of your attributes and your disengagement from the garments of these [attributes]. *Your Lord has prescribed for Himself mercy*: He has committed His essence to replace your attributes with His attributes as a mercy for you, since in God there is compensation for all that has gone before: *truly whoever of you does evil in ignorance*, that is, upon whomever there manifests in his variegation one of his attributes as a result of absence or forgetfulness, but then returns from that variegation after the manifestation [upon him] of that attribute and rejoins the presence, having come to know that [attribute] and curbed it through repentance to God and humble submission before Him and [through] spiritual discipline, *truly He is Forgiving*, covering that [attribute] from him, *Merciful*’, to him by granting him fixity and the grace of uprightness.

[6:55] *And thus We distinguish the signs*, that is, just like that clarification that We have made to these believers, We clarify to you Our attributes, *and that it may become clear [to you] the way*, of those who are veiled by their attributes, those who act on them in the [evil] way that they do, which is their crime.

[6:56] *Say: ‘Truly I have been forbidden to worship*, those besides God whom you worship by your caprice in the way of wealth or soul or lust or corporeal pleasure or otherwise, but no: *I shall not follow your whims*, by worshipping these and then end up

astray by being veiled thereby and fail to be guided to the affirmation of Oneness. The significance of the [use of the] past tense [here of the verb *qad dalaltu*] is that my error would have been realised in such a situation and I would be nowhere near guidance.

[6:59] *And with Him are the keys of the Unseen*, to the end [of the verse]: know that the unseen is made up of levels, the first of which is the unseen of unseens which is the knowledge of God called first solicitude; then comes the unseen of the world of spirits which is the engraving in an all-encompassing manner of the forms of all that has existed and will exist from pre-eternity and sempiternity in the first intelligible world which is the spirit of the world called the Mother Book, which is the preceding decree; then comes the unseen of the world of the hearts which is that very engraving itself differentiated in cognitive detail universally and particularly in the world of the universal soul, which is the heart of the world called the Preserved Tablet; then comes the unseen of the imaginal world, which is the engraving of engendered beings in their entirety within the particular souls of the celestial spheres imprinted in the celestial bodies therein entified, individuated and joined to their moments in accordance to the very thing that occurs: this world is the one referred to in the [revelations of the] law as the heaven of this world (*al-samā' al-dunyā*), since it is the nearest of the levels of the unseen to the world of witnessing and the tablet of divine predestination, which is the differentiated form of His decree. God's knowledge, which is the first solicitude, entails His encompassing of all things by the presence of His essence in all of these worlds, which constitute the very source of His essence, such that He has knowledge of them together with all of the forms within them as individual entities and not through some additional form: [His] knowledge of these is the very thing that they are. *Not even the weight of an atom escapes Him in the heavens or in the earth* [Q. 34:3]. Thus if *mafātih* is [taken as] the plural of *maftah*, which is a 'store' (*makhzan*), then it means that with Him are those storehouses that subsume all of the unseens, by virtue of His essence being present therein; **none but He knows them**. If it is [taken as] the plural of *miftah*, in the sens of 'key' (*miftāḥ*), then either it has that very meaning [of 'keys'], in other words, that its doors are closed and the keys are in His hand such that no one accesses them, or [it has the meaning] that the causes of its [the unseen's] manifestation and its being brought out from its place to the world of witness such that creatures are able to know it lies in His power and His disposal, preserved with Him, none other than Him is able to extract it from Him in order to know what it contains, being His Names, exalted be He; as for the 'clear book', this is the heaven of this world by virtue of these particulars being entified therein despite their number and individuations.

[6:60] *Then He raises you up therein*, that is, in the sound deeds that you have committed and [in] what you have earned, for recompense, *so that a term*, which He has specified for resurrection and revivification, *may be accomplished*, whereafter you shall be returned to your Lord at the source of the nondelimited union so that He might inform you [of what you used to do] by making manifest upon you the forms of your deeds and recompense you therewith.

[6:61] *He is the Vanquisher over His servants*, by His disposal over them as He wishes and His annihilation of them in the source of nondelimited union, since there is nothing that will not be vanquished therein. *And He sends over you guardians*, namely, their faculties wherein is imprinted every state in accordance with the extent of its firm-rootedness or lack thereof, manifesting itself on them upon their being stripped off from the body and assuming a form that corresponds to it, being either subtle and spiritual leading it to the spirit and to reward, or dark and corporeal leading it to chastisement. Indeed these forms will be manifested upon their limbs and organs, becoming configured according to their configurations and will speak against them through their deeds by the tongue of the state; and [these guardians] are also the heavenly faculties, to which we have alluded and the engraving therein of all particular accidents, that are manifested on them in their entirety upon their separation from the body, leaving out neither small nor great but having counted it against them [cf. Q. 18:49], these being the very messengers that receive them upon death.

[6:62] The ‘restoration’ shall also be to the source of the nondelimited union for the reckoning. *He is the swiftest of reckoners*, since their reckoning takes place at the same time as their death.

[6:63] *Say: ‘Who delivers you from the darkneses of the land*, that are the veils of the corporeal coverings and the ego-centric attributes, *and, the darkneses of, the sea*, that are the veils of the attributes of hearts and the reflection of the intellects; *you call upon Him*, to remove these [veils], *openly*, in your souls, *and secretly*, in your inmost consciousness, *“Verily, if He were to deliver us from these*, veils, *we shall truly be among*, those who are thankful for the grace of deliverance through uprightness and fixity.

[6:64] *Say: ‘God delivers you therefrom*, by removing those veils by means of the lights of the self-disclosures of His attributes, *and from every distress*, that is, [from] what remains in your preparedness of the potential for your perfections, [delivering you therefrom] by bringing these out, even if a remnant of the remnants of your existence should be a distress for you because of your preparedness for annihilation and for the deliverance of yourselves from this [remnant] totally by the potency of [your] preparedness and the perfection of [your] yearning, then He would deliver you

therefrom, *yet you*, after coming to know this noble station and what has been kept in store for you, *associate*, with Him your souls and your caprices worshipping them.

[6:65] *Say: 'He has the power to send forth upon you a chastisement from above you*, by your being veiled by intelligibles and spiritual veils, *or from beneath your feet*, by your being veiled by the veils of nature, *or to confound you in parties*, or to mix you together as separate parties, each party following the religion of one of your faculties which they take as their imam and by which they counterpose the other party, so that confusion and chaos or fighting ensues between you; or [He mixes you] as parties with differing creeds, each party following the religion of a false messiah or a human devil or a jinn which they adopt as their imam; or He makes your souls as parties by making each one of your faculties hold sway over your hearts so that it [the soul] seeks its own particular pleasure through that [faculty], with one drawing him to wrath while the another [draws him] to lust or covetousness or otherwise. The heart thus becomes overwhelmed and incapacitated between them, captive in their hold, every time it resolves to actualise the pleasure of this [faculty], the other one prevents it. Confusion and chaos ensues between these [faculties] within your existences since they are not disciplined by the rule of one subjugating master who is able to vanquish them and to govern them with a unified command and establish each one of these [faculties] in its [proper] station where it would reside obedient and compliant, so that the kingdom of existence stands in order and the dominion is established for the master of the heart. According to this [last] interpretation, every one of them would constitute a party or separate parties following different religions and not any one individual.

[6:66] *Your people have denied it*, that is, your people [have denied] this chastisement; *yet it is the, fixed, truth*, that shall descend upon them. *Say: 'I am not a guardian over you*: [I am not] one who has been charged with guardianship [of you], to protect you and defend you from this chastisement.

[6:67] *For every*, thing concerning which a tidings comes, there is a locus in which it will occur and reside. *And you will come to know'*, when the coverings of your bodies are removed from you and the pain of this chastisement reveals itself upon you in the forms deserved by your souls.

[6:68] *When you see those who engage in discourse about Our signs*, that is, Our attributes, by manifesting the attributes of their souls and affirming that they possess knowledge and power; *turn away from them*, for they are veiled and are idolaters. *And if Satan should make you forget*, by seducing you with falsehoods and superstitions and through the evil insinuations of your soul such that you manifest yourself through some of its attributes and end up corresponding to these [idolaters] in genus, inclining to



companionship of them, *then do not sit after*, having remembered by Our reminding of you, *with the folk*, who have committed evil against their souls by placing their attributes in place of My attributes and veiling these [souls] with their attributes. For companionship of them has influence and you are on the verge of succumbing to becoming veiled by the misfortune of their company by means of variegation.

[6:69] *And upon*, those who are affirmers of Oneness, who disengage from the garments of their attributes and shun their configurations, there shall be no [obligation to] account for those [others] who are veiled, *in any way [whatsoever]*: in other words, they shall not become veiled as a result of their mixing with them and thus end up being equal to them [in veiledness]. Rather, We have mentioned them so that perhaps they will guard against keeping company with them and [against] any variegation which they might fall into or [against becoming involved in] their evil fate, their affair and their account and keep company with them. Instead, let them remind them from time to time with the minimum of interaction so that perhaps they might guard against acts of idolatrous association and being veiled and be delivered by the blessedness of the companionship of those [God-fearing ones]. Or [it means] that they are not accountable for the deeds of those [veiled ones] and their evil consequences; but let them mention these [deeds] to them with censure and prohibition that perhaps they might guard against such [deeds].

[6:70] *And forsake those who take*, that is, shun those whose religion and habit are caprice and diversion, since they pay no attention to this [Reminder] because of the firm-rootedness of that conviction in them and [because of] their being deluded by the sensory life. Turn away from them and warn by means of the Qurʾān lest a soul should be veiled for what it has earned when the religion and custom of such [a soul] is not like that<sup>77</sup> and in whom that conviction has not taken a firm rooting, but [a soul] which nevertheless commits by natural inclination deeds that are similar to the deeds of those [veiled ones] and might thus become veiled because of them. For such [a soul] will be influenced by this [Reminder] and will take heed and desist: so warn such [a soul] lest it should become like them and be prevented by its deeds from guidance whereafter, once it has been veiled by what it has earned, no ransom will be accepted from it. The draught of boiling water constitutes the intensity of its yearning for perfection because

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<sup>77</sup> In other words, the Reminder of the Qurʾān is of use for those individuals whose religion and habit is not quite caprice and diversion, but who nevertheless succumb to natural temptations that make them seem similar to those whose religion and habit *is* caprice and diversion (mentioned at the beginning of the passage), in whose case the Reminder falls on deaf ears.

of the potency of its preparedness; the painful chastisement is its privation from that [perfection] because of its being veiled by its deeds and configurations.

[6:71] *Say: ‘Shall we call upon, instead of God: that is, shall we worship that which in reality has no power or existence to profit or cause hurt, and so be turned back, to idolatrous association, after God has guided us?, with true guidance to the affirmation of [His] Oneness — Like one whom, the devils of estimation and imagination have carried off in the pursuit of the earth of the soul, bewildered, not knowing in which direction to walk or what to do, without a path or a purpose; he has companions, escorts in the way of reflection and practical and considerative reason, who call him to guidance, saying: “Come to us, for this is the path [of guidance]!”*, but he does not hear because the auditory channels of his heart are sealed [shut] with caprice. *Say: ‘Truly, the guidance of God, which is the path of the affirmation of Oneness, is [the true] guidance, and nothing else; and we have been commanded to submit to the Lord of the Worlds, so that we might be willingly led to the attribute of lordship by the effacing of our attributes in the One disclosing Himself in that [attribute of lordship] and submitting It to Him,*

[6:72] *and so that we might establish the prayer of the presence of the heart, fear Him and take Him as a shield for us against [the manifestation of our] attributes so that He might be the One whose attributes are assumed [by us] and that through Him we might be rid of our existence so that He might be the One to Whom the gathering will be by His essence upon our annihilation in Him.*

[6:73] *He it is Who created, the heavens of the spirits and the earth of the body, upholding justice, which is the exigency of His essence. And the day He says, ‘Be’, and it is, that is, the moment of timeless time which is the pre-eternity of the pre-eternal manifestation of things in the pre-eternity of His essence, which is the absolute beginninglessness of pre-eternity, being when His eternal will became attached to the manifestation [of that will] in the entifications of His essence, expressed in His statement ‘Be’: this is after the beginninglessness of pre-eternities, considered rationally, but not in the sense that these [entifications] are posterior to that beginninglessness, rather in terms of the hierarchy of rational consideration of His essence, exalted be He. For entifications are posterior to the absolute pure Ipseity by virtue of reason and in reality: the manifestation of these [entifications] through [His] will referred to by His words ‘Be and it is’ without any interval or posteriority, is expressed by [the form] ‘and it is’, because in pre-eternity it was not but then came to be. His words are the truth: that is, at that moment especially the timelessness of His will, which entailed the existence of originated things in the way that they were, fixed in their state and immutable, also entailed that these be in the most excellent way possible in terms of*

organisation and hierarchy and in the most equitable way in terms of configuration and composition; *the day when the Trumpet is blown*, the moment of His blowing into the Trumpet, namely, [the moment of] giving life to the forms of engendered things (*mukawwanāt*) by effusing their spirits upon them, there is no kingdom other than His, for in themselves these [things] are dead, having neither existence nor life, let alone any ownership (*mālikiyya*). *He is the Knower of the Unseen*, that is, the realities of the world of spirits, which constitute His dominion (*malakūt*), *and the visible*, that is, the forms of the world of bodies, which constitute His kingdom (*mulk*). *He is the Wise*, who has brought these into existence and placed them within a hierarchy in accordance with His wisdom, effusing upon each form the spirit that befits it; *the Aware*, who knows their innermost aspects and outward ones, their specific qualities and their acts. In sum: He is the originator of spirits and the absolute body by His fixed eternal beginningless will that is ever immutable, a creation from nothing that is just and wise as entailed by His essence, and [He is] the engenderer of engendered beings (*kā'ināt*) by producing them in the world of the Kingdom of which He is the owner, and no other, in the way that He desires, Knower of the obligations that must rest upon them, Wise in perfecting them, their organisation and their hierarchy, Aware of the accidental states that occur therein in accordance with His will through His essence, without any partner in all of that.

[6:74] *And when Abraham said to his father*, that is, remind of the moment of Abraham's wayfaring along the path of the affirmation of Oneness when We gave him insight and guidance and apprised him of the idolatry of his people and their veiledness by the manifestation of the world of the kingdom from the realities of the world of the dominion and His lordship, exalted be He, of [all] things through His names, believing [instead] in the effective power of celestial bodies and engendered beings, distracted thereby from the Engenderer Himself, which is why he [Abraham] censures them for that, saying to their leader and their most senior one, his father: *'Do you take idols as gods?',* believing in their efficacy? *I see you and your people in manifest error'*, [error] that is manifest and can be known sensorially.

[6:75] And such insight and all-inclusive perfect knowledge We grant to Abraham and show him, *the kingdom of the heavens and the earth*, namely, the spiritual faculties by which God governs the affairs of the heavens and the earth, since for every thing there is a faculty from the world of the dominion that preserves it and governs its affair by God's permission, *and that he might be of those knowing with certainty*: We did that, that is, We gave him insight so that he might know and learn that only God has the power to effect, governing through His names, each [of these] constituting His essence

together with one of the attributes, as a result of which acts multiply from behind the veils of engendered existence (*akwān*). Thus the one who is veiled by engendered existence and has stopped at the sensory will see these acts as issuing from engendered beings; and the one who has passed beyond it, who has pierced through the veil of existence and has stopped at the rational detained in its shackles will see them as issuing from the dominion, whereas the one who is guided by the light of divine guidance, the eye of whose insight is open will see that the dominion relative to God's essence, exalted be He, is equal to the kingdom relative to the dominion: so just as he does not see effect as issuing from engendered things, he does not see it as issuing from the dominion of these [engendered things], rather from their King and Engenderer, and so he says: "Truly there is no god except God!"

[6:76] *When night descended upon him*, that is, when the night of the world of corporeal nature grew dark over him during his childhood and early youth, *he saw*, the star of the dominion of the human frame, which is the soul referred to as 'spiritual spirit' he found that his effusion, his life and his lordship was issuing from this [soul], since God, exalted be He, was showing him at that moment through His name the Life-giver (*muḥyī*), and so he [Abraham] said [the following] by the tongue of his state: '*This is my Lord*'. *But when it set*, by his crossing over the station of the soul and [by] the rising of the light of the heart and its radiating over him with its vestiges of maturity, rational comprehension and knowledge of the contingency of the soul and the necessity of its being imprinted upon the body, *he said*, '*I love not those that set*', those who are eclipsed in the setting place of the body, who are veiled by it, hiding behind the darkness of contingent existence and the need for the other.

[6:77] *And when he saw*, the moon of the heart standing prominent upon his arrival at the station of the heart and his having risen above the horizon of the soul by prevailing over it; and [when] he saw his effusion, through the unveilings of realities, and his knowledge and lordship as issuing from it [the moon of the heart], for God, exalted be He, was at that instance showing him through His name[s] the Knower and the Wise: *he said*, '*This is my Lord*'. *But when it set*, by becoming veiled from him and its crossing over from his stage and his sensing that its light was drawn from the sun of the spirit and that it would set in the darkness of the soul and its attributes and be veiled thereby, having thus no light, he turned away from his station to wayfare along the path of the self-disclosure of the spirit, saying: '*Unless my Lord guides me*, to the light of His Face, *I shall surely become one of the folk who are astray*', those who veil themselves from Him behind esoteric aspects, such as the Christians who stop at the luminous veils.

[6:78] *And when he saw the sun*, the spirit, *shining prominent*, by its self-disclosure to him and the manifestation of its light, he found that his effusion, his presential vision and his lordship as issuing from it [the spirit], for God, exalted be He, was now showing him through His name[s] the Witness, the Sublime and the Tremendous; *he said, 'This is my Lord; this is greater!'*, because of its tremendousness and the intensity of its luminosity. *But when it set*, as a result of the dominance of the lights of the self-disclosure of the Truth and the rising of the august glories of the Abiding Face and the unveiling of the veil of the Essence upon his arrival at the station of unity, he saw that to look upon the spirit and his own existence was an act of idolatrous association, and so, *he said, 'O my people, surely I am innocent of what you associate*, with Him, that is, whatever that thing be, since there is no existence other than His.

[6:79] *Verily I have turned my face*, that is, I have surrendered my essence and my existence, *to Him Who*, brought into existence the heavens of the spirits and the earth of the soul, inclining [myself] away from all that is other than Him, even from my own existence, by annihilation in Him, *and I am not of those that associate others [with God]'*, that is, I have nothing to do with idolatrous association whatsoever, be it the existence of remnants [in me] or their manifestation or otherwise.

[6:80] *But his people disputed with him*, over [his] denial of the effective power of celestial bodies and engendered beings and [over] shunning the worship of all that is besides God. *He said, 'Do you dispute with me concerning God when He has guided me*, to the affirmation of His Oneness? *I, shall, have no fear of what you associate with Him*, and [what] you claim of its effective power, ever, *except*, at the moment, *that my Lord should will something*, to befall me from its part in the way of some mishap or harm, but that would be from Him [in reality] and with His knowledge, not from it. *My Lord encompasses all things through His knowledge*, knowing my state and wherein lies my welfare: if in His knowledge He should deem it better for me to suffer harm from its part, He will do so; *will you not remember*, and thus distinguish between what is incapable and one who is Powerful?

[6:82] *Those who believe*, with the affirmation of the unity of the essence, *and have not*, confounded, *their belief with evildoing*, in the way of the manifesting of the soul of the heart, or the existence of some remnant, [both of] which are subtle [forms of] idolatrous association, *theirs is*, true, *security*, alongside which there is no fear, *and they are rightly guided*, in reality to the Truth.

[6:83] *That argument of Ours*, that is, the argument for affirming [God's] Oneness with which Abraham used against his people.

[6:84] *And We bestowed upon him Isaac and Jacob; each one We guided. And Noah We guided before, and of his seed, David and Solomon and Job and Joseph, and Moses and Aaron; and so We requite the virtuous.*

[6:85] [*And Zachariah and John, and Jesus, and Elias*] *all were of the righteous*, those who uphold the righteousness of the world and keep its organisation in check, managing it in order that they might become upright through the existence bestowed by [His name] the Truth after the annihilation of human existence.

[6:86] [*And Ishmael and Elisha, and Jonab and Lot:*] *all We preferred above*, the two worlds of their time.

[6:91] *They measured not God with His true measure when they said, 'God has not revealed anything to any mortal'*: that is to say, they did not know Him as He should be known, for they went beyond the limit in defining His transcendence making Him remote from His servants to the extent that nothing of His knowledge or His words could become manifest upon them. Had they known Him as He ought to be known, they would have realised that His servants have no existence nor does anything else [for that matter] except through Him. All exists through His existence: there is no existence except His. The entirety of the world of the visible is His exoteric aspect and [the entirety of] the world of the unseen is His esoteric aspect and for every esoteric aspect there is an exoteric one. So what inhibition is there against that certain of His attributes should manifest themselves in a human locus? Indeed, there is no [better] locus for the manifestation of His perfect esoteric knowledge and wisdom than the perfect man. The Prophet therefore, in terms of form, represents His exoteric aspect, and in terms of meaning, represents His esoteric aspect: His knowledge descends onto his heart and manifests itself on his tongue, wherewith he calls His servants to His essence. There is no dualism here, except when considering the differentiation of His attributes. However, when considering the union, there is no existent other than Him, neither the Prophet nor anyone else. If one were to consider the differentiations of His attributes and His names, the Prophet becomes manifest as a consequence of the specific in His essence, exalted by He, through certain of His attributes and becomes one of His names. If he is perfect in his prophethood, then that [name] would be [God's] Greatest Name by which alone the gates of the storehouses of His unseen, His existence and His wisdom are opened, as you will have heard. Therefore do not deny [it], if you feel stupified by, and deprived of, its understanding and are dumbfounded: it may be that God will open up the eye of your insight and so you see what no eye has ever seen, or [that He will open up] the hearing of your heart and you hear what no ear

has ever heard, or that He will illumine your heart such that you will perceive what has never occurred to the mind (*qalb*) of a mortal.

[6:93] *And who does greater evil than he who invents lies against God*, by [falsely] claiming to have [attained] perfection and to have arrived at the affirmation of Oneness, and to have rid himself of the multiplicity of the soul's attributes and their thronging [within him], despite their remaining in him, such that in his statements and acts he is [acting] through his soul while he claims to be [acting] through God; *or who says, 'It is revealed to me', when nothing has been revealed to him*, that is, he supposes that the fabrications of his illusion and imagination and the inventions of his intellect and reflection are revelations from God and an effusion from the Holy Spirit, such that he claims prophecy; *or he who says, 'I will reveal the like of what God has revealed'?*, that is, he acts [haughtily] like Pharaoh through the existence of his egoism, under the illusion that cognitive affirmation of Oneness is located in him as an individual and thus he claims divinity. *If you could only see when the evildoers*, that is, [when] those evildoing and veiled claimants of perfection, who allege that their acts are divine, while they are ego-centric, and [when] those false prophets and pseudo-Pharaohs, *are in the agonies of death*, that is, [in] its adverse moments and throes, lost as they are in their claims and errors, supposing themselves to have been annihilated from their souls and disengaged from the garments of their bodies, despite the intensity of their attachment to these and the potency of [their] love of this world and the firm-rootedness of caprice in them — for they have not died through voluntary death or disengagement from lusts and corporeal pleasures and have not been annihilated from the attributes of their souls and their exigencies such that natural death should then be brandished against them; *and the angels*, that is, the faculties of the world that used to reinforce their ego-centric faculties through the souls of the heavenly bodies and the celestial spheres, and their effects, [effects] which used to hold sway over them during their lifetimes, while they supposed that they were rid of them through disengagement, as we have pointed out: *extend their hands*, having a powerful and overwhelming effect upon them, [the hands] signifying the quintessence of their faculties and powers: *'Give up your souls!*, that is, they treat these [souls] harshly and compel them because of the intensity with which they cleave [to their bodies] and the extent of their distress and the difficulty they find in separating from the bodies. *Today you shall be requited with the chastisement of humiliation*, and abasement for the existence of the attributes of your souls and their injurious dark configurations and the veils of your egoism and your Pharaonic haughtiness, as He says *He will assuredly requite them for their describing* [Q. 6:139], *because of what you used to say about God [that was] other than the truth*, that is,

because of your falsely imputing to God deeds and statements that issued from the attributes of your souls and their caprices, *and that you used to scorn His signs'*, and also because of your being veiled by your egoism and your Pharaoh-like behaviour, enamoured of your attributes, refusing to be obedient, by effacing them, to Our attributes, veiled from these [last] by the existence of those [that are yours], scornful of those [attributes that are Ours] because of these [attributes of yours].

[6:94] *And now you have come to Us singly*, disengaged from attributes, attachments, family, relations and existence by being absorbed in the source of the Essential union, *as We created you the first time*, by producing the atoms of your ipseities in pre-eternity at the taking of the covenant [cf. Q. 7:172], *and you have left what We conferred on you*, of means, forms of knowledge and qualities of excellence, *behind your backs; and We do not see with you*, your means, your causes and what you preferred by your caprices and attached yourselves to of your beloved things and your objects of worship, *whom you claimed to be associates amongst you*, out of your love for them and your devotion to them and your ascribing of [the power of] effect to them, and your heeding of them and equipping of yourselves with them. Now that separation has befallen you as a result of the mutation of states and the changing of forms and figures, *and that which you claimed*, as a thing possessing existence, *has failed you*, by your witnessing: [this statement] constituting universal laudation of God.

[6:95] *God it is Who splits*, the grain of the heart by the light of the spirit from the forms of knowledge and [various] gnoses, and [Who splits] the date-stone of the soul by the light of the heart from character traits and virtues. *He brings forth*, the one who is alive in his heart from the one who is dead in his soul, at times by giving mastery to the light of the spirit over this [soul], *and is the Bringer-forth*, of the one who is dead in his soul from the one who is alive in his heart at other times by that [living] person's turning to it and his falling under the sway of caprice and the attributes of the soul. *That is God*, the One who has the power to turn over your states and making you prevail in your [various] stages. *How then*, are you turned away from Him to another?

[6:96] *He is the Cleaver of the daybreak*, that is, the Cleaver of the darkness of the attributes of the soul from the heart by the breaking through of the light of the sun of the spirit and its radiation over it [the soul]; *and He has appointed*, the darkness of the soul a stillness for the heart in which it might rest, to make use of it and refresh itself at times, or [He appointed it] a residence wherein reside the corporeal faculties and find stability from restlessness. The sun of the spirit and the moon of the heart are reckoned among the ranks of the noble remaining existents that can be relied upon, or [they are] the two forms of knowledge for the reckoning of states and moments which should be



heeded. *That is the ordaining of the Mighty*, the one who has the power to do that, *the Knower*, of the states of projection (*burūz*) and unveiling (*inkishāf*), and being concealed or veiled in these two [states], at times He is mighty by being veiled in them and from them in the covers of His majesty and at other times by His self-disclosure and His vanquishing and annihilation of the two. By His wisdom He knows what He does.

[6:97] *And He it is Who appointed for you*, the stars of the senses, *that you may guide your course by them amid the darkness*, of the land of bodies, to the welfare of livelihood and [to] the sea of hearts by acquiring knowledge by these [senses]. *Verily We have distinguished the signs*, that is, the spirit, the heart and the senses, *for a people who know*, that.

[6:98] *And He it is Who produced you from a single soul*, namely, the universal soul, *such that some are established*, in the earth of the body during the state of manifestation, *and some are deposited*, in the source of the Essential union during the state of annihilation. *Verily We have distinguished*, the signs of the manifestation of the soul, its establishing and its depositing, *for a people who understand*, by the illumination of their hearts and the purity of their comprehensions.

[6:99] *And He it is Who sent down*, from the heaven of the spirit, the water of knowledge, *and therewith We bring forth plants*, of every kind of character trait and quality of excellence; *and We bring forth*, from the plants the configuration of a verdant soul, fairly and beautifully adorned, as well as gladdened by knowledge and [virtuous] character traits, *bringing forth*, from that configuration and [that] tender and pliant soul, corresponding noble deeds that are pleasing and sincere intentions by which the heart is fortified; and from the palm-tree of the intellect by the manifestation of its attachment, [We bring forth] gnoses and realities that are close for the picking because of their being manifested by the light of the spirit, being as though self-evident, *and gardens of grapes*: states, tastes and especially the [various] types of the love of the heart (*maḥabba qalbiyya*), whose pressed nectar and unpressed dregs are both intoxicating, and the olives of reflection and the pomegranates of truthful estimations which are the noble aspirations and the resolves of the soul, *similar*, are some of them to others, like as attachments, reflections, gnoses, realities, deeds, intentions and like the love of the [one's own] essence and the love of the attributes, *but not alike*, as in the case of the [various] types of love and deeds, for example, or [it means] that they are similar in level, potency, weakness, its clarity and its obscurity and dissimilar in these. *Look upon their fruits when they have borne fruit*, and be mindful of them through self-examination during the wayfaring and the incipience of a state, and let your look fall away from pleasures to these fruits, *and their ripening*, their perfection upon the arrival at the

presence. *Surely, in all that are signs for a people who believe*, with cognitive faith and who have certainty regarding these signs and states that we have enumerated.

[6:100] *Yet they ascribe to God as associates the jinn*, that is, they assign the jinn of illusion and imagination as associates of God by their obedience and submission to them, when they know that God created them: how then do they worship other than Him? *And they falsely impute to Him*, they are at variance in [their] pure calumny, [ascribing to Him], *sons*, from the intellects, *and daughters*, from the souls, believing them to be effective and to be disengaged entities like Him, generated from Him, *without any knowledge*, on their part that these are His names and attributes that have no effect except through Him. *Glory be to Him and exalted be He*, transcendent is He above that He should be a disengaged existent specified by one particular single entification from among entified existents from whom there issue the existences of disengaged intellects and souls, and greatly magnified and extolled be He, *above what they describe*, Him with!

[6:101] *The Originator of the heavens and the earth*, that is, One without analogue or equal in the heavens of the world of spirits and the earth of the world of bodies: *how should He have a son*, that is to say, how can anything be equal to Him, *when He has no consort*, since a consort can only be [a consort] through a correspondence in genus, whereas He does not share a correspondence with any genus and since He does not share a correspondence in genus with anything nothing can be equal to Him. Thus there can be no equal of Him from whom something would be generated; *and He created everything*, by His specification [thereof], [each] entified in His essence and is existentiated through His existence and not because that thing is an existent like Him; *and He has knowledge of all things*: His knowledge encompasses intellects, souls and other things just as His existence encompasses theirs, while these [things] are encompassed and cannot encompass His knowledge and has no knowledge except through His knowledge and do not exist except through His existence. Thus they are not equal to Him since in themselves they are non-existent and how can a non-existent be equal to the Absolute Existent?

[6:102] *That*, Originator Who is without equal, described by all of these attributes, *then is God, your Lord. There is no god*, in existence, *but Him*, that is, there is no existent except Him when considering the union;<sup>78</sup> *the Creator of all things*, when considering

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<sup>78</sup> That is because 'the union' is the Truth without engendered beings: cf. Kāshānī, *Rashḥ al-zulāl fī sharḥ al-alfāz al-mutadāwala bayna arbāb al-adhwāq wa'l-aḥwāl*, ed. Sa'īd 'Abd al-Fattāh. Cairo: al-Maktaba al-Azhariyya li'l-Turāth, 1995, 75.

the differentiations of His attributes. So single out worship for Him [alone], that is, for the Existence that is qualified by all attributes, Who is God, to the exclusion of what is besides Him. *And He is Guardian over all things*: in other words, only the Originator of all things is worthy of worship; yet despite that He is Guardian over all, preserving them, governing them and furnishing them with provisions and what is needed so that they might attain the perfection that is attached to them.

[6:103] *Vision cannot perceive Him*, that is, it cannot encompass Him, because He is too subtle and majestic for its perception. How can it perceive Him when it cannot perceive its own soul which is but a light from Him? *Yet He perceives [all] vision*, because He encompasses all things and [because of] the subtlety of His perception.

[6:104] *Clear insights have come to you from your Lord*, that is, clear signs, being the forms of the self-disclosures of His attributes which are the lights of the insights of the heart, for insight is a light by which the heart perceives, much as eyesight is the light by which they eyes perceive; *whoever perceives*, that is, [whoever] becomes perceptive by these [insights], then the benefit of his perceptions and guidance is only for his own soul; and whoever is veiled from these [insights], then the hurt of his veiledness does not extend to anyone else, rather to him alone. *And I am not a keeper over you*, a watcher to watch over you and preserve you from misguidance; rather it is God who is the Keeper, preserving you and preserving your deeds.

[6:107] *Had God willed, they would not have been idolaters*: in other words, everything that takes place only occurs by the will of God and there is no doubt that the preparednesses by which they fell into idolatry and the causes of such [error] in the way of the teachings of their parents, habits and otherwise take place also by the will of God, for otherwise these things would not take place. If they believe in that, then it will have been by the guidance of God; if not, then be easy on yourself; *and We have not set you as a keeper over them*, to preserve them from misguidance, *nor are you*, appointed as a guardian to make them believe. This does not contradict what He says to them in censure later on, where He says, *The idolaters will say, 'Had God willed, we would not have been idolaters* [Q. 6:148], because they said that out of obstinacy and as a way of pushing away [the need for] faith by that pretext and not out of conviction. Thus with this statement of theirs, even if it might be true in the same case, they were lying and denying the Messenger. For had they been sincere, then they would have known that the affirmation of Oneness on the part of the believers was also by God's will; such is the case with any set of beliefs (*dīn*) but without obduracy or enmity towards anyone. Had they known that everything occurs only by the will of God, they would not have remained idolaters. Rather they would have become affirmers of [God's] Oneness. Nay,

they said that with the purpose of imputing lies, to be obstinate and to prove that they were incapable of desisting from their idolatry. That is why God censures them with that [statement of theirs] and not because it is not so. For they have not been apprised of God's will and just as He willed that they be idolaters at a previous point in time, so now He does not will that they have faith. It is not that the heart of each one of them has been imprinted [with disbelief]: the proof of this is the faith of some of them. Why can it not be that some of them were prepared for faith and affirmation of the Oneness, yet were veiled by habit and by what they received from their fathers and thus fell into idolatry, but that then when they heard the warning and witnessed the signs of the Oneness, they yearned for the Truth and their veil was lifted and they affirmed [His] Oneness? That is why He rebukes them with their own statement and demands of them proof that God had always willed that for them, and warns them with the threat of punishment given to those before them, so that perhaps the one in whom there is a modicum of preparedness, when he has been severed from his [false] argument and has heard the threat of punishment given to deniers before him, his veil might be lifted and his heart might soften and he might believe, all of which would be a facilitation for him [from God] and a graciousness in his case; for the world of wisdom is built upon [such] causality. As for the one who belongs with the wretched, those who are turned away, their hearts sealed, he does not pay attention, nor does he give ear, to [any of] that.

[6:109] *They have sworn by God the most earnest oaths that if there came to them a sign,* to the end [of the verse]: they demanded that habits [within the natural world] be broken and refused clear proofs, because they were veiled by sense and all that is sensory, which is why the call [made] on the basis of wisdom and confirmation through proof, that works with the intelligent ones who are prepared, was of no use with those. *Say, 'Signs,* that is, the breaking of the habits [of nature] which they requested belong to the world of power which is only with Him. *But what will make you realise,* that they will not believe when these [signs] come? In other words, I know better than you do that they will not believe in them. Or [it means] what will make you realise that they will believe if these [signs] were to come? Perhaps if they were to come, they would not believe in them. For in the case of he from whom God does not want belief, He will turn his heart and his eyesight over upon the coming of the sign which he had requested and upon the coming of which he claimed that he would believe, such that he will say, "This is sorcery!" and will not believe in it just as he did not believe before the coming of the sign. He [God] will then leave him to the manifestation of his soul in its attributes and his veiling of himself therewith; that is why He says [the following] at the end of the second verse [in this narrative]:

[6:111] *yet they would not have believed, unless God willed*: meaning the one who prepares himself for faith, having understood the rational and perceived the argument, with the eye of his insight having been opened by the smallest light of God's guidance and having embraced faith for the smallest reason. As for the one who is not prepared for that and was not created for it, were he to see every single sign of the breaking of the habit [of the natural world] or otherwise, it would have no effect on him; *but most of them are ignorant*, of the fact that faith is by the will of God and not by the breaking of habits. Faith that results from the witnessing of the breaking of habits carries no weight in reality, for this might well be [a case of simply] yielding to a sensory affair and affirming [faith] by the tongue, which means nothing in terms of the heart, like the faith of the followers of the Samaritan [cf. Q. 20:85ff]. Faith can only be [true if it is] through the inner heart (*janān*), as God, exalted be He, says *The Bedouins say, 'We believe'. Say, 'You do not believe, but rather say, "We have submitted" for faith has not yet entered into your hearts'* [Q. 49:14].

[6:112] *And so We have appointed to every Prophet an enemy*, to the end [of the verse]: it is a concomitant of the hierarchical order of the levels of spirits that the purest and most luminous of preparednesses be countered by the most sullied, the darkest and the remotest of these, and the concomitant of that is that there be an enemy for every prophet on account of the real contrareity between the two. The significance of the existence of an enemy as his counterpart is that the perfection predetermined for him [that prophet] in accordance with his preparedness does not manifest itself upon him except by the potency of [his] love for [divine] reinforcement [against that enemy]. As for vanquishing, it is [the result of] his [that prophet's] soul being broken by that [enemy] and his humiliation and disdain of him [the enemy], his constancy upon encountering him at the station of the heart as well as his endurance in turning away from the soul and its pleasures by his preoccupation with the enemy, distracted from it by the intense vehemence and eager desire to secure the excellent quality by which he vanquishes that enemy, guarding himself against animal and satanic garments that he might thereby distance himself from his [the enemy's] station and [from] any correspondence with him, and lest the latter find a means of defaming, disdain or scorning him by that [soul]. That is why he [the Prophet] said, 'No prophet has ever been suffered hurt as I have', for no one possesses the [potential for] perfection which he possesses. Thus the cause for bringing that [potentiality] out into actuality must necessarily be more powerful, given the sheer extent of his [the Prophet's] remoteness from the attributes of the soul and its habits.

[6:113] *And that the hearts of those who do not believe in the Hereafter may incline to it*, and that the veiled ones might incline to it by their correspondence [to it], *and that they may be pleased with it*, because of their love of it, intensifying their errancy and causing them to make common cause [against the Prophet] and causing the evils within them to come out into actuality, that they might increase in insolence and transgression against the Prophet, thereby enhancing the potential for his perfection and also for that reason stirring the exigencies of the believers and those in whose preparedness there is a correspondence to the Prophet, provoking their vehemence and increasing their love of the Prophet and their support of him such that their perfections are manifested upon them and the Prophet is fortified by them, as the saying goes that the renown of shaykhs and the great number of their disciples is only [precipitated] by [the great number of] those who deny them.

[6:115] *Perfected is the word of your Lord in truthfulness and justice*, that is, His decree has been completed in pre-eternity, in the sense of what He has decreed and determined of the submission of those who will submit and the disbelief of those who will disbelieve, the love of those whom He will love and the enmity of those to whom He will be an enemy, a decree concluded and a judgement that is truthful and corresponding to what will happen, equitable in the correspondence of every speech, every perfection and state to the preparedness of that person from whom they will issue and their being entailed in him; *none can change*, His pre-eternal judgements. *He is the Hearer*, of the predetermined words and acts which they manifest, *the Knower*, of what they hide.

[6:116] [*If you obey*] *most of those on earth*, those who are in the lower aspect, by leaning towards this world and the world of the soul and nature, *they will lead you astray from the way of God*, by their adorning of their refined speech for you and their calling of you to [indulge in] what they are involved in; *they follow only supposition*, since they are veiled from certainty by illusions and imaginations at the station of the soul; *they are merely*, conjecturing [by replacing] forms with meanings, the Hereafter with this world and estimating [what] the states [will be] at the final return, as well as the essence of the Truth and His attributes, such as the states of the means of livelihood, in addition to their essences and their attributes, falling thereby into idolatrous association and permitting certain things that are forbidden.

[6:118] *So eat*, to the end [of the verse]: this is known from what has already been mentioned in [*sūrat*] al-Mā'ida [Q. 5:1-5] and constitute a cause for the prohibition against obeying or following the leaders of misguidance.

[6:120] [*And forsake*] *the outward aspect of sin*, evil deeds and words that manifest themselves upon the limbs, *and its inward aspect*, corrupt beliefs and false resolves.

[6:122] *Why, is he who was dead*, by ignorance, which is the soul, and by his being veiled by its attributes, *and We gave him life*, through knowledge and love of the Truth, or through the removal of the veils of his attributes by means of the self-disclosures of Our attributes, *and appointed for him a light*, from Our guidance and Our knowledge, or a light from Our attributes, or a light from Us by Our eternal sustenance of him through Our essence in the measure commensurate with his levels, [is such a person] like one whose attribute is [as] this, that is, [as mentioned in] this statement, which is that he is in the darkneses of his soul and its attributes and its acts from which he is unable to emerge? *So has been adorned*, for those who are veiled, their deeds, and thus they are veiled by them.

[6:123] *And thus, We have made in every town*, by virtue of the wisdom mentioned whereby prophets are exalted. So it is also in the town of man's existence, which is the body: We have made them great ones, its sinners from among the faculties of the commanding soul, that they may plot therein by leading the heart astray, tempting it and enticing into error; *but they plot only against their souls*, because the sequel of their plotting shall return against them by causing them to be consumed by the fires of the loss of instruments and means in the Hell-fire of caprice and privation from pleasures and lusts and [by] the actualisation of the corporeal instruments in the vilest of forms and in the worst of states upon the disintegration of the body and at the final return and the sending forth [for the resurrection].

[6:124] *And when a sign comes to them*, in the way of an attribute of the heart, a luminous radiation from an angelic character configuration, or knowledge, wisdom and an effusion from a spirit, they deny them by turning away therefrom and [instead], from the part of the estimation and the imagination, they wish for perceptions similar to those intellective and reflective perceptions, and [desire] imaginary compositions and estimative fallacies with which to oppose the veridical proofs in order to believe in them and to yield thereto. *God knows best where to place His Message*, placing it only where it belongs among the spiritual faculties that are disengaged from primordial substrata. *Those who have sinned*, by being veiled and plotting to lead astray those who have prepared themselves to be guided, or [those] who pure hearts that have become guided, *shall be smitten with humiliation from God*, by the elimination of their capacities and their empowerment at the disintegration of the body, *and a terrible chastisement*, by depriving them of what is favourable for them and the procurement [to them] of what is incompatible for them at the physical resurrection in return for their plotting.

[6:125] *Whomever*, from among these faculties, *God desires to guide*, to submission to the intellect, *He expands his breast*, that is, He facilitates [things] for him and makes his countenance, the one that is adjacent to the heart, projecting and capacious for the acceptance of His light and empowered for Its reception; *and whomever He desires to send astray, He makes his breast*, He makes [things] difficult for him and incapacitates him therefrom, *narrow*, darkened and deficient in its preparedness to receive the light [from Him], as though he were engaged in something impossible in seeking illumination from the light of the heart and requesting effusion therefrom. On the basis of this interpretation that we have mentioned and according to the exoteric meaning signified by the preceding verse: the one whom God desires to guide to affirmation of [His] Oneness, He expands his breast by the reception of the light of the Truth and the submission of existence to God through the removal of the veils of the attributes of his soul from the countenance of the heart that is adjacent to the soul, enlarging it thereby for the reception of the light of the Truth. As for the one whom He wishes to send astray, He makes his breast narrow and constricted by causing it [the soul] to dominate it and oppress it, *as if he were engaged in ascent*, to the heaven of his spirit with those corporeal configurations, which is an impossibility. *So, God casts*, the ignominy of being polluted by the pollutants of material attachments, or the ignominy of being chastised with corporeal configurations, *over those who do not believe*.

[6:126] *And this*, that is, the path of the affirmation of Oneness and the submission of one's countenance to God, *is the path of your Lord, a straight one*, with no crookedness in it whatsoever that might incline to the side of forms or the side of meanings or to the inspection of what is other [than God] and the commission thereby of idolatrous association. *We have detailed the signs for a people who remember*, the gnoses and the realities that are centred within their preparedness so that they might be guided therewith.

[6:127] *Theirs will be the abode of peace*, of safety from every deficiency, fault, fear of the manifestation of an attribute or the existence of a remnant, *with their Lord*, in the presence of His attributes, or the presence of His essence; *and He will be their Friend*, granting them His love and perfection and admitting them into the shade of His attributes and His essence, placing them within His security by means of timeless subsistence after the annihilation of the misfortunes precipitated by the deeds of their hearts and their [spiritual] moulds during their wayfaring.

[6:128] *And, the day when He shall gather them*, on the day of the source of the nondelimited union, *all together*, We shall say: *'O assembly*, of the jinn of the ego-centric faculties, *you have garnered much of mankind'*, that is, [much] of the senses and



the external organs, or of the human forms, making them your adherents and the folk whom you obey and your seducing of them and adorning for them the ephemera of this world and corporeal pleasures and your evil whisperings to them to [commit] acts of disobedience. *Then their friends from among mankind*, who befriended them, *will say, ‘Our Lord, we enjoyed one another*, by profiting each from the other in the form of the concentration (*jam’iyya*), *but*, verily, *now we have arrived at the term which You have appointed for us*’, at death, or at the physical return in the vilest of forms and the most evil of living. *He will say, ‘The Fire*, the fire of being deprived of pleasures and the finding of pain, *is your lodging to abide therein’ — except what*, moment, *God wills*, that it be lessened or that from among you should be delivered he the cause of whose chastisement is not idolatrous association that had been firmly-rooted in his beliefs. *Surely your Lord is Wise*, not chastising you except for the configurations of your souls that you have acquired, commensurate with what is entailed by [His] wisdom, *Knowing*, of the one who is chastised for his beliefs and whose chastisement thus endures, or [who is chastised] for the configurations of his evil deeds and who is thus chastised in the measure commensurate with these [configurations] but is then delivered therefrom.

[6:129] *So, We let some of the evildoers become associate of others*, in other words, just like that tremendous and awesome assignment [of chastisement], We assign some to be associates of others by virtue of the consonance of their gains and their mutual correspondence. Thus they become associates of one another and are gathered together in the chastisement, as in the case of the jinn and humans that We have mentioned; or We assign some of them to be masters of others by chastising one for what he [the other] has earned, in the Fire.

[6:130] [*‘O assembly of jinn and mankind: did not*] *messengers come to you from among you*, from among those mortals who are of your own species — and on the basis of interpretation — the [messengers] mentioned from among your intellects which are faculties from among your own species? These questions, responses and testimonies are all [spoken] by the tongue of the state and the manifestation of descriptions — as in the saying: “The wall said to the nail, “Why do you split me?”, to which the nail replied, “Ask the one who is hammering me!” — and as the witnessing of hands and legs in the forms that correspond to the configurations of their deeds and by which they are chastised.

[6:131] *That*: a reference to the sending of messengers [to them], the explanation of signs and the reinforcing of arguments through warning and threat. In other words, the matter is that, because your Lord would never destroy towns while they were heedless through [an act of] injustice, since that is contradictory to [His] wisdom.

[6:132] *All shall have degrees*, of proximity and remoteness as a result of the deeds that they have committed.

[6:133] *If He will, He can remove you*, by annihilating your very being, *and leave to succeed after you*, from the folk who are obedient to Him, by His mercy.

[6:146] *That*, namely, the prohibiting to them of wholesome things is a requital with which, *We requited them*, for their insolence; *verily We are truthful*, in promising them requital for insolence.

[6:147] *So, if they deny you*, [by saying] that God is the Lord of all-embracing mercy and will not chastise us for our insolence, *then say*: ‘Yea! *Your Lord is the Lord of all-embracing mercy*, but He is also the Lord of severe vanquishing whose mercy will not repel His might, *from the sinning folk*’. Rather, it may be that He has deposited His vanquishing in the form of His graciousness and His graciousness in the form of His vanquishing.

[6:148] *So, those who were before them gave the lie*, that is, [so] the deniers gave the lie to messengers before them by making their disbelief [as something] dependent on the will of God, out of obduracy and recalcitrance, and they were [indeed] chastised for their disbelief. *Say*: ‘*Have you any knowledge, such that you can adduce for us?*’, that is to say, if you were to have any knowledge or proof of that, then illustrate [it]. He says this by way of allusion to their statement ‘*Had God willed, we would not have been idolaters* [Q. 6:148], for had they said that on the basis of some [factual] knowledge, they would have known that the faith of those who believe in the Oneness [of God] and everything else only comes to be through the will of God. So on the basis of what are they [the deniers] hostile to them when they [the believers] have not rejected them, but even associated with them until there remained no disagreement between them and the believers. By God, had they said that out of knowledge, they would not have actually been idolaters, nay, rather affirmers of Oneness. But they followed supposition regarding that and based themselves on estimation (*taqdīr*) and conjecture, their purpose being denial and recalcitrance; and what they have heard from the messengers constitutes an indictment of them and proof that they are not prevented from [the call of] the messengers. [All of that is] because they are veiled at the station of the soul: whence certainty for them then and how could they know what God’s will might be?

[6:149] *Say*: ‘*To God belongs the conclusive argument*: in other words, if your supposition were sincere, in terms of making your idolatry contingent upon the will of God, then you have no argument against the believers or other religious folk, since every religion would then be the result of God’s will, in which case you ought to be in

agreement with them and to believe them. Nay, God has the conclusive argument against you in that there is an obligation upon you to believe them [the messengers] and to affirm that you have ascribed to the One without whose will nothing takes place partners whose will there is no trace of outright. Hence you are pre-eternally wretched, deserving of banishment and punishment; *for had He willed, He could have guided all of you*, in other words, yes you are correct [in one sense], but just as He willed that you be unbelievers, had He willed He could have guided you all. On the basis of what, however, do you [think that you] know that He willed not that you be guided for you to then insist [on your idolatry]. This [statement] is meant to incite those among them who may have the preparedness to curb [the inclination to unbelief] and be guided and thus revert from idolatry and become a believer.

[6:151] *Say: 'Come, I will recite that which your Lord has made a sacred duty for you:* having proven that in terms of what they deem licit and make illicit idolaters are [merely] following their caprices, since idolatry in itself is simply the worship of caprice and Satan — and so when they became veiled in the attributes of the soul from the attributes of the Truth and made caprice master over them, worshipping it and obeying its commands and its prohibitions in terms of what it [caprice] deems licit or illicit — He makes it clear that the act of deeming things licit or illicit that is pursued regarding these has been commanded by God, exalted be He; and given that the discourse is directed at them with regard to their prohibiting what are goodly things, He enumerates the things that are forbidden in order that the permitted things be inferred therefrom. By forbidding genera of vices, He has encompassed all the types of excellent things. He begins by forbidding the vice of the speech faculty, which is the noblest of them [the faculties] — for the vice thereof is the worst of grave sins, entailing as it does all [other] vices, in contrast to the vices of its two sister-faculties, the bestial and the predatory — and says: *that you associate nothing with Him*, since idolatrous association is the result of its mistaken consideration and its shortcoming in employing the intellect and perceiving the proof. He then follows it with [the mention of] being dutiful to parents. For knowledge of the rights due to them comes after the knowledge of God in terms of existention and lordship, as they [the parents] are two causes that are close in terms of existence and nurture and two means which God, exalted be He, has made loci for the manifestation of His two attributes of existention and lordship. That is why he [the Prophet?] said, 'Whoever is obedient to his parents is indeed obedient to God and His Messenger'. Disobedience to them comes after idolatry, since ignorance of what is due to them can only be out of the ignorance of what is due to God and of the knowledge of His attributes. Then [He mentions] the prohibition

against the slaying of one's children for fear of poverty. To do that can only be the result of ignorance and blindness concerning His causation of provision for every creature and [ignorance of] that the provisions of servants are in His hand, expanding provision for whomever He wishes or restricting [it], and the result of being veiled from the mystery of [divine] predetermination, not knowing thus that provisions are predetermined in relation to lifespans, much like the predetermination of terms of life. And so the most important of these [vices] occurs as a result of its [the faculty's] erroneous knowledge of God's essence. The second [of these vices] is the result of its error regarding the knowledge of His attributes. The third is the result of [the error regarding] the knowledge of His acts. Thus only a degenerate who is veiled from the essence of God, exalted be He, and from His attributes and acts commits these three [types of] vices, and these veilings are the mother of all vices and the roots thereof. He then illustrates the vice of the bestial faculty, because its vice is more manifest and long-standing, saying: *and that you do not draw near any acts of lewdness*, deeds that are despicable and vile to the intellect, *whether it be manifest*, such as engaging in illicit fornication in inns, drinking wine and the consumption of usury, *or concealed*, such as seeking acts of lewdness such as those mentioned, having the intention and the resolve to [commit] them or hiding them, as in the case of theft or engaging in forbidden things secretly. He then points out the vice of the predatorial faculty, saying: *and that you do not slay the life which God has made sacred*, that is to say, through retaliation or disbelief. He concludes the narrative with His words: *This*, the avoidance of the three genera of the vices of the soul, *is what He has charged you with that perhaps you will understand*: in other words, only the people of the intellect are able to avoid them. The one who commits them is one without [the faculty of] reason (*'aql*). He then wishes to illustrate that the three vices by their confluence entail the vice of injustice, which is the greatest of these [vices] and the sum thereof, just as the virtues [of the soul] entail justice, which is the perfection of these [virtues] and the one that subsumes them [all]. Thus He says:

[6:152] *And that you do not approach the property of the orphan*, in any way whatsoever, *save with that which is fairer*, except through that trait which is more virtuous, in the way of preserving that [property] or making it multiply, *until he is of age*, and profits from it, as opposed to [approaching it] by consuming it and spending it for your use or wasting it, since that is most vile. Then after He has illustrated the illicitness of the four genera of vice in their entirety in detail, He enjoins the obligation of the four virtues in a generalised form, because the detailing of the vices avails of the need to detail their counterparts [from among the virtues] since they are included all of them in

[the virtue of] justice and so He has enjoined it in all of its aspects, whether in acts or speech, saying: *And give full measure and full weight in justice*, that is, observe justice between you and [other] creatures in an absolute way. *And if you speak, then be just*, in other words, say only what is the truth, *even if he*, the one concerning whom it is spoken, *should be a kinsman*: so do not be biased in speaking for him or against him by adding or withholding [facts]. *And fulfil God's covenant*, that is, the affirmation of Oneness and obedience and all that is between you and God in terms of what the former covenant entails for the subsequent one. And since the wayfaring upon the path of virtue, that is the path of the unity and the orienting of oneself towards the Truth, is difficult — being, as they say, 'finer than a hair and sharper than [the edge of] a sword' — especially [difficult] in terms of acts, since to be mindful of moderation regarding them without inclining in some way to the side of excess or immoderation is extremely difficult, He, after saying *And give full measure and full weight in justice*, says, *We do not charge any soul beyond its capacity*, illustrating that in this instance [of the Qur'an] He has combined the prohibition against all vices and the enjoining of all virtues in their entirety in such a way that no particulars of the subdivisions of these [two categories of vice and virtue] have been omitted, which is why Ibn 'Abbās, may God be satisfied with him, said: 'Verily these are clear verses of which nothing has been abrogated by anything in any of the scriptures'. The followers of the two scriptures and all of the sects and creeds are in agreement over his words. Ka'b al-Aḥbār, 'By the One in whose hand lies the soul of Ka'b, these were the first [verses] of the Torah'. *This*, what has been mentioned in terms of the obligation to desist from all vices and to acquire all virtues, *is what He has charged you with*, in all scriptures by the tongues of all messengers, *that perhaps you will remember*, upon hearing them, what God has endowed you with of perfection and deposited in your preparedness from pre-eternity.

[6:153] *And that this*, the path of virtues, since the source of virtue is the unity. Do you not see how these [virtues] are middle ways and forms of moderateness between the two aspects of immoderation and excess which can only be in reality pursued in terms of designation (*ta'yīn*) by the one who is upright following the religion of God and whom God reinforces by facilitating [for him] the wayfaring along the path of the Truth until he arrives at [the stage of] being annihilated from his attributes, then from his essence, then in the state of subsistence after the annihilation he acquires the attributes of God, exalted be He, such that he subsists through God and becomes upright for Him and by Him. Thereupon his path becomes the path of the Truth and his journeying the journey to God, *My path, it is a straight one*, that is, My path can only be wayfared upon by the one who subsists in Me upright, inclining not to the right or to the left for

some purpose; *so follow it and do not follow other ways*, such as [those of] schismatic creeds and differing religions, as these are coventions invented by those who are veiled in habits and caprices, that is to say, a convention for them lest they increase in darkness, insolence and bewilderment. Ibn Mas‘ūd related from the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, that he [the Messenger] drew a line [in the sand] and said, ‘This is the path of right guidance’, then drew lines to the right and to the left of it and said, ‘These are [other] paths, upon each of them is a devil summoning [man] to that [path]’; he then recited this verse: *lest it separate you away from His way*, that is, from wayfaring along the path of unity and virtue. [*This is what He has ordained for you, that perhaps you will be wary*’, of the divided paths, by avoiding what is entailed in caprices and the exigencies of the souls and by making God your shield for adhering to virtues and avoiding vices.

[6:154] *Then We gave Moses the Scripture*: that is to say, after He charged you with wayfaring along the path of virtue in ancient times, We gave Moses the scripture, *complete for him who does good*, that is, to consummate the nobleness of sanctity and the grace of prophethood over and above the virtuousness of Moses in his wayfaring along the path of perfection and the station he attained of communion [with God] and proximity [to Him] by means of the existence divinely-endowed after the annihilation in the unity, as God says *and when he recovered his senses he said, ‘Glory be to You! I repent to You and I am the first of those who believe’* [Q. 7:143], in perfection and in [the necessity of] calling creatures to the Truth, *and a detailing of all things*, which creatures will need for the final return, *and as a guidance*, for them to their Lord in wayfaring along His path, *and a mercy*, to them, in effusing unto them His perfections by means of Moses and the scripture given to him, *that perhaps they might believe in the encounter with their Lord*, with either cognitive faith or that [faith] of presential vision.

[6:155] *And this is a Book which We have revealed, blessed*, by the addition of guidance to the simple affirmation of Oneness and the direction to the even way, guiding by the shortest of paths to the most exalted degrees of perfection; *so follow it, and be wary*, of all that is besides God, even your own essences and attributes, *that perhaps you might be shown mercy*, the mercy of being upright through God and in God by means of the endowed existence.

[6:157] *Or lest you should say, ‘If the Scripture had been revealed to us, we would have surely been more rightly guided than they are’*, because of the potency of our preparednesses and the purity of our minds, were you to be telling the truth. *Now indeed a clear proof has come to you from your Lord*, illustrating the modality of how

you should wayfare, *and a guidance*, to your goal, *and a mercy*, by easing for you the path and its facilitating for you [the way] to the noblest of perfections.

[6:158] *Are they waiting for nothing less than that the angels should come to them*, to receive their spirits in death, *or that your Lord should come*, by His self-disclosure in all of the attributes, as has already been alluded to in terms of the transmutation of form at the Resurrection such that none but the perfected affirmers of Oneness know Him, whereas the people of the creeds and [other] differing religions only know Him in the form of their belief [regarding Him]; *or that one of your Lord's signs should come?*, His self-disclosure in an attribute which they never knew of Him. *On the day that one of your Lord's signs comes*, a self-disclosure of His with which they were never intimate, or which they never knew, *it shall not benefit a soul to believe if it had not believed theretofore*, for people are either veiled absolutely or otherwise, and they are either believers by their knowledge of some attributes or all of them. Those who believe in Him and know Him in all of these [attributes] are either lovers of the Essence or lovers of [His] attributes. So when the Truth discloses Himself in one of the attributes, the faith of those who are veiled absolutely is of no avail, nor the faith of those believers who did not know Him in that attribute prior to that self-disclosure, since faith is only beneficial when it has become a fixed and firmly rooted conviction embodied in the heart and one by which the soul is illumined and by which the spirit witnesses, and not that [faith] which comes about suddenly out of some urgent necessity; *or earned in its faith some good*, such as the faith of the knowers and lovers of the attributes, for these, even if they should believe in Him and have come to know of His self-disclosures in all of the attributes, because they have not acquired the Essential love and the absolute perfection and have loved Him through one of the attributes, such as the Gracious, for example, or the Gentle or the Merciful, when He discloses Himself in the attribute of the Vengeful or the Vanquisher or the Tester, their faith in Him shall not benefit them then, since they will not have been obedient to Him before that description and will not have been disciplined by that self-disclosure of His and loved the Essence to experience the pleasure of witnessing Him in whatever attribute it may be.

[6:159] *Those who have divided their religion*, that is, who have made their religion a collection of divided caprices, such as those overcome by the attributes of the soul some of which draw them to this, while others draw them to that, such that there issue in them varying caprices and they thus remain bewildered without direction or goal, *and have become parties*, groups differing depending on which of the caprices has overcome [them], with some overcome by wrath, others by lust. And if they were to have a religion, they make their religion, depending on the caprice that has overcome them,

the very substratum of their partisanship and the reinforcement for the sway of that faculty that has overcome the heart. Their acts of worship are but habits and innovations, obeying as they do only caprices and deceptions, each of them worshipping a deity conjured by his illusion and conceived in his imagination and making that [deity] a cause for his arrogance towards, and division from, the other, as we witness in the case the adherents of the exoteric schools; *you have no concern with them at all*, that is to say, it is not your concern to guide them or to call them to the affirmation of Oneness in any way, since they are the folk of schism and of being veiled by multiplicity, their goal never being one. *Their case will go to God*, in terms of the recompense for their division, and not to you. *Then He will inform them*, upon the manifestation on them of the configurations of their differing souls and divided caprices at the separation of bodies, *of what they used to do*, of evil deeds.

[6:160] *Whoever brings a good deed, shall receive tenfold the like of it*, this being the least of the degrees of reward. For the good deed issues by the manifestation of the heart, while the evil deed by the manifestation of the soul. Thus the smallest degrees of the reward for it [the good deed] is that he should arrive at the station of the heart which comes after the station of the soul in terms of ascension in the way that the level of tens comes after that of ones in the context of numbers; *and whoever brings an evil deed shall only be requited the like of it*, since there is no station lower than the station of the soul and so he necessarily descends to it and finds his recompense at the station of the soul to be the like of [the deed]. From this it can be inferred that reward pertains to [God's] bounty, for its recipient is enhanced by it and his preparedness is illumined [thereby] and his receptivity to the effusion of the Truth is increased, strengthening him many times his deed, causing him to acquire rewards that multiply infinitely by the increased receptivity upon the performance of every good deed and the increase in capacity for, and love of, the good deed upon the increase of the effusion to an extent which only God knows, as He says after having mentioned its doubling up to seven hundred times: *and God multiplies [the reward] for whom He will* [Q. 2:261]. And [it can be inferred] that punishment pertains to [God's] justice, since justice entails equality and so the one who acts through his soul, but is not pardoned, is recompensed with the soul equally. Remember what is said in His statement, exalted be He *for it is what it has merited and against it is what it has earned* [Q. 2:286]. Virtue for man is essential, causing him ever to rise higher, while with vice, its darkness is accidental to the primordial nature. Thus as long as it [the vice] is not deliberate or intentional on the part of the person, or it is [so] but he does not persist in it, it is pardoned and does not veil him. But if it is [intentional] and he persists in it, he is recompensed at the station of the



soul with the like of it. The good deed and the evil deed mentioned here pertain to actions, for otherwise it may be that one man's evil deed be equal to another's good deed, as he [‘Alī], peace be upon him, said, ‘The good deeds of the pious are the evil deeds of those brought near by the existence of the heart at the witnessing, while the evil deeds of the pious are by the manifestation of the soul at the wayfaring; their good deeds are by the manifestation of the heart’. It may be that an evil deed results in an eternal veiling, as in the case of idolatrous belief, for example.

[6:161] *Say: ‘As for me, my Lord has guided me to a straight path, to the path of the affirmation of the unity of the Essence, a right religion, forever firmly established, which creeds and sects cannot alter nor abrogate the [other] laws and scriptures, the creed of Abraham, with which he turned away from all else by rising above all of the levels, inclining away from every false religion and path that contains any idolatry, even if it be in the case of one of God’s attributes, exalted be He.*

[6:162] *Say: ‘My prayer, that is, my presence of heart and witnessing in spirit, and my rituals, that is, my drawing near or all that by which I seek to draw closer through the heart, and my living, in the Truth, and my dying, to my soul, all, are for God, no portion being in it for me or for anyone else, since I did that for Him by [my] annihilation. Hence I possess no existence nor does anyone else that I should thus possess a share or a portion; [for] the Lord of the Worlds, that is, [all that is] for Him in consideration of the union in the form of the differentiations of [His] lordship.*

[6:163] *No associate has He, in that, [either] in the union or the differentiation. And to this I have been commanded, that is, I have been commanded to see nothing other than Him at the source of the union, or in the form of the differentiations, so that I might strive for Him as He has described me, exalted be He, in His words *The eye did not swerve, nor did it go beyond [the bounds]* [Q. 53:17], and so He is the one who commands and the one commanded, the one seeing and the thing seen, and I am the first of those who submit’, of those who yield to the annihilation in Him, by submitting my countenance to Him according to that level within the differentiations of the Essence, for otherwise there would be no first or last, submitter or disbeliever.*

[6:164] *Say: ‘Is it any other than God, whose affair is as [described] here, that I should seek for a lord, and hence demand the impossible, or [should I] seek as a goal [something] other than the Essence that subsumes all of the attributes, that is the All qua all, for it then to turn out to be merely a subject of a lord and not a lord in itself, when He is the Lord of all things?’*, all that is other than Him, in consideration of the differentiations of His attributes, being subject to the Lord. *Every soul earns only, something that is of evil consequence, against itself:* for the earnings of the soul

constitute an idolatrous association with His acts, exalted be He, and every individual guilty of such association, the evil consequence [of his action] shall be upon him by virtue of his being veiled, *and no burdened soul shall bear the burden of another*, by virtue of the fact that the configuration of that burden is firmly rooted [only] in that [particular soul] and adheres to it [alone], such that it [that soul] veils itself therewith: how then can it [the burden] pertain to another [soul]?

[6:165] *And He it is Who has made you successors*, in His earth by manifesting His perfections in you as loci of manifestation to enable you to execute His command, *and has raised some of you above others in degrees*, within the manifested forms of His perfections in accordance with the varying degrees of your preparednesses, *so that He may try you in what He has given you*, of His perfections in accordance with preparednesses, [to ascertain] who observes the dues of that [perfection] which is manifested upon him, who fails to observe [them] and who observes what is due to Me by wayfaring in the path of these [perfections], until God makes these [perfections] manifest by concealing the attributes of that person's soul such that he will have fulfilled the trusts of God, and [to ascertain] who does not observe [them] and is thus a treacherous one; and [until] your deeds are manifested upon you in accordance with [the fulfilment of] these [dues] such that it results in recompense for these [deeds] all together either by the requital of veiling in the case of shortcomings, where your Lord is swift in punishment, or by the reward of exteriorisation (*burūz*) and unveiling, where He is Forgiving covering up your acts and the attributes of your souls, which had covered and veiled those divine attributes and lordly perfections, being Merciful to you by manifesting these [attributes and perfections] upon you. Yet God knows best the realities of matters.

[7] al-A‘rāf

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[7:1] *Alif Lām Mīm Ṣād.*

[7:2] *A Book that is revealed to you*, to where He says *as a reminder for those who believe*: *Alif* is an allusion to the Essence of the [exclusive] unity (*aḥadiyya*); *lām* [is an allusion] to the Essence combined with the attribute of knowledge, as has already been mentioned; *mīm* [is an allusion] to the all-comprehensive talisman (*tamīma*)<sup>79</sup> which is the meaning of Muḥammad, that is, his soul and his reality; and *ṣād* [is an allusion] to the Muḥammadan form which is his body and his external aspect. It is related from Ibn ‘Abbās that he said, ‘*Ṣād* is a mountain outside Mecca atop of which was the Throne of the Compassionate (*‘arsh al-Raḥmān*) before there was either night or day’. By the mountain he was alluding to Muḥammad and by the Throne of the Compassionate to his heart, as stated by the *ḥadīth* [to the effect that]: ‘The heart of the believer is the Throne of God’. It has also been related that: ‘Neither My earth nor My heaven can embrace Me, but the heart of My believing servant embraces Me’. As for his words, ‘before there was either night or day’, these are an allusion to the unity, since when the heart falls under the shadow of the earth of the soul and is veiled by the attributes of this [soul] it is night for it; but when there rises over it the light of the sun of the spirit and it finds light by the light of this [spirit] then it is day. When it [the heart] arrives at the true unity through gnosis and presential vision of the essence and both light and darkness become equal for it, then for it that moment will be neither day nor night and the Compassionate’s Throne will only be at that moment. Thus the meaning of the verse is that the existence of the All from beginning to end is a Book that has been revealed to you, that is to say, a Book the knowledge of which has been revealed to you. *So let there be no inhibition in your breast because of It*, that is, [let there not be] any constraint [in your breast] to bear it, lest it not be able to embrace it by virtue of its tremendousness such that it then dissipates in the annihilation in the unity and the

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<sup>79</sup> The word *tamīma* signifies an ‘amulet’, known from pre-Islamic times, which would be placed around the necks of children to protect them from the evil eye, sickness and so on. However, I have chosen to render it as talisman (*ḥilsim*) in deference to Ibn ‘Arabī’s discussion of ‘the waystation of three talismanic mysteries, which are formed and governed by the Muhammadan presence’, the three talismans being reflection, imagination and habit each of which rule over a particular aspect (the rational faculties, meanings and the rational soul, respectively): see Chittick 1989: 184-5; on *tamīma* see Toufic Fahd, ‘tamīma’, *EI2*, X, 177.

absorption in the source of the union and the distraction from the differentiation, since he [Muḥammad], peace be upon him, was at the station of annihilation veiled by the Truth from creatures: each time that existence was restored to him and he was veiled from the presential vision of [his] essence and [that existence] manifested itself upon him at [the level of] differentiation, his vessel (*wi'ā'*) narrowed and he became laden with a burden and a weight. That is why he was addressed with His words: *did We not expand your breast for you and relieve you of your burden* [Q. 94:1-2] by means of existence endowed by the Truth and uprightness in subsistence following annihilation through fixity (*tamkīn*), so that your breast might embrace union and differentiation, the Truth and creatures, and there would no longer remain any burden upon you at the source of the union nor any veiling by one from the other; ***that you may warn thereby***, and remind with a true reminder, ***those who believe***, with a faith based on the unseen. In other words, let not your breast be constrained by this [Book] so that you might be able to warn and to remind. For if it were to become constrained, he would have remained in the state of annihilation, unable to see [anything] in existence but the Truth, looking upon the Truth through the lens of pure non-existence: how then would he [be able to] warn and remind or command and forbid. If it is taken to be an oath, then the significance would be [those who believe] in the All, from beginning to end, or [those who believe] in the God's Greatest Name, for *ṣād* is the bearer of the Throne, and the Throne embraces the Essence and the attributes, the sum total being the Greatest Name: that verily it is a Book the knowledge of which has been revealed to you. Or, [it means] verily this Qur'ān is a Book that has been revealed to you.

[7:8] ***The weighing on that day, is the true [weighing]***: the weighing is the [conceptual] consideration, that is, the [basis for the] consideration of deeds when the minor resurrection has taken place shall be the truth, that is, justice or what is fixed or the just weighing on that day. ***As for those whose scales are heavy***, that is, those whose weighed things preponderate, being the enduring righteous deeds, ***they are the successful***, who prevail with the attributes of primordial nature and the bliss of the Garden of the attributes at the station of the heart.

[7:9] ***And as for those whose scales are light***, whose weighed things [are light], being those perishing sensory things, ***those are the ones who have lost their souls***, by having sold them in exchange for hasty pleasures that are quick to disappear and by annihilating them in the abode of annihilation despite their [the souls'] being the commodity [to be exchanged] for subsistence. Know that the tongue of the scale of Truth is the attribute of justice. One of His two palms is the world of the senses, while the other palm is the world of the intellect. Thus the one earnings were the enduring

intelligibles, virtuous character traits, and the good deeds that are joined to sincere intentions, then these [acquisitions] will have weight, that is to say, they will have value and weight, since there is no weightier value than everlasting subsistence. As for the one whose acquisitions were the ephemeral sensory things, transient pleasures, corrupt passionate desires, despicable character traits and ruinous evils, these [acquisitions] will weigh in lightly, that is to say, they shall have no value and are useless, there being no lightness lighter than what has perished. Their loss then resides in their having forfeited their original preparedness when they sought the ephemera of this world and the actualisation of egoistic goals by virtue of their having manifested themselves through the attributes of their souls and of their not having done justice to the attributes of God, exalted be He, by denying them, that is, by concealing them with the attributes of their souls.

[7:12] [*He [Iblis] said, 'I am better than him.'*] *You created me from fire, while him You created from clay*: You created the estimative faculty from the subtlest parts of the animal spirit that comes into being in the heart as a result of the vaporousness and delicateness of the mixtures and rises to the brain. That spirit is the hottest element in the body, which is why he referred to as 'fire'. Heat necessitates ascent and rising. We have already mentioned how every spiritual faculty (*quwwa malakūtiyya*) is aware of the specific qualities of the one below it but not of the one above it and [is aware] of the perfections of the body and their specific qualities as well as the perfections of the animal spirit and their specific qualities: this [faculty's] veiledness from the spiritual human perfections and those [perfections] of the heart represents the image (*ṣūra*) of its denial and the causative factor in its recalcitrance, its haughtiness and its transgressing [the bounds] of its stage in judging intelligible meanings and disengaged realities. The refusal to accept the judgement of the intellect is [represented by] the image (*ṣūra*) of its refusal to prostrate.

[7:13] [*Said He, 'Then go down from it' — it is not for you to be haughty here*, since to act with haughtiness, which is to feign a quality that one does not have, is of the attributes of the soul. Thus it is not befitting of the spiritual presence which you claim to belong to [by right] by your acting superior to the intellect: begone [from here]. You are not from among its [rightful] inhabitants, those who are the glorious ones, [rather] *you are surely among the abased!*', from among the egocentric faculties that adhere to the lower aspect, which shall be forever ignominious by virtue of its adherence to [physical] bodies,

[7:14] *until the day when they are resurrected*', from the tombs of [their] bodies and the burial places of the attributes of the soul following voluntary death at the middle

resurrection through the life of the heart and the deliverance of primordial nature from the veils of configuration. Or [it means] [until] they are resurrected after annihilation in the unity at the major resurrection through the existence that is bestowed by the Truth and [through] real life. The former [type of] resurrected individual is the one who is *muklis*, while the latter is *mukblaş*. Iblis has no means of leading either of these two astray.

[7:16] [*Said he,*] *'Now, by that You have sent me astray:* this is an avowal. Iblis is veiled from the Essence of the unity but not from the attributes and the acts. Thus his presential vision of the acts and his revering of them constitutes a pledge by them, as he vows by His might where God says [that Satan says] *Now, by Your might, I shall surely pervert them all* [Q. 38:82]; *verily I shall sit in ambush for them on Your [straight] path,* that is, verily I shall get in their way on the path of affirming the unity of the Essence and shall verily impede them from wayfaring along it by distracting them with what is other than You and I shall verily come upon them from all four directions, those from which the enemy comes at the [moment of] witnessing. For his coming [upon them] from below, that is, from the direction of judgements based on the senses and measures (*tadābīr*) based on particulars on the basis of what is in the best interest in terms of this world does not necessarily result in being led astray. Nay, it could be profitable in terms of the natural and physical sciences and the intellect could be assisted by [this coming of him] in these [sciences], as has already been mentioned in the interpretation of His words *they would surely have received nourishment from above them and from beneath their feet* [Q. 5:66]. As for his coming [upon them] from above, this is not possible for him since the higher aspect is the one that is adjacent to the spirit and [the one] from which issue veracious inspirations and angelic castings<sup>80</sup> and [from which] are effused gnosés and spiritual realities; which leaves the four directions, the places from which issue his evil whisperings. As for 'from before him', [he comes upon him thus] by making him feel secure from God's plotting and tempting him with [the concept of] God being Forgiving and Merciful such that he does not come to fear [Him] and so [Iblis] slows him down from [the performance of] acts of obedience. As for 'from behind him', [he comes upon him thus] by making him fearful of impoverishment and [his] offspring being ruined after him and so he [Iblis] incites him to gather and store up for them and for himself in the future having entertained the hope of a long life. As for [Iblis' coming upon him] from the right side, [he does so] by adorning for him qualities of excellence in him and making him proud of his merit, his knowledge and his [acts of] obedience,

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<sup>80</sup> The 'castings' are the knowledge of the unseen realities which angels ('casters') cast into the heart: see Chittick 1989: 260ff.

veiling him thereby from God by making him see the causes of his excellence. As for [Iblis' coming] from the left side, [he does this] by driving him to acts of disobedience and vileness and summoning him to passionate desires and pleasures.

[7:17] *And You will not find most of them thankful*, employing their faculties and limbs and what God has graced them with in the path of obedience and seeking proximity to God.

[7:18] *As for those of them, who follow you I shall assuredly fill Hell*, [physical] nature, which is the lowest of the levels of existence, *with all of you*, veiled from the pleasure of eternal bliss and the tasting of timeless subsistence, [and from] spiritual perfections and the perfections that come from the Truth, chastised by the fires of privation from what is desired, in the fluctuations (*inqilāb*) of the world of contrareity and the turbulences (*taqallubāt*) of engendered being and corruption.

[7:20] [*Then Satan whispered to them*] *that he might manifest to them that which was hidden to them of their shameful parts*, in other words, that he might make manifest upon them, by making them incline to [physical] nature, what had been veiled from them upon their disengagement from physical affairs, corporeal pleasures, despicable traits of character, animal acts and predatorial and bestial acts which man is ashamed to manifest and is averse to revealing, and which manliness impels him to conceal, since these constitutes shameful parts from the point of view of the intellect which disdains them and deems them vile. *And he said, 'Your Lord prohibited you from this tree only, lest you become angels*, in other words, he gave them the illusion that in connecting with the physical nature of bodies and primordial substrata there can be [found] angelic pleasures, as well as perceptions, acts and immortality therein; or [that there is therein] a kingdom and dominion over the faculties and all animal beings forever without end — if one is to read *malikīn* [instead of *malakayn*], as where he [Iblis] says [to Adam] *shall I guide you to the Tree of Immortality and a kingdom that does not waste away?* [Q. 20:120]. Thus, in the guise of trustworthy counselor, he adorned for them aspects of welfare that are partial and [various] sensory ornaments, neither of which can be attained except through the instruments of the body.

[7:22] *Thus did he lead them*, that is, thus he brought them down to attachment to these [aforementioned things] and to feeling reassured with them by virtue of the way in which he deluded them in donning the garb of a counselor and giving them to believe mistakenly that corporeal pleasures and human dominion are everlasting. He also enticed them with corporeal benefits and passionate desires of the soul; *and they set about piecing together onto themselves some of the leaves of the Garden*, that is, [they set about] concealing the coverings of physical nature with virtuous dispositions and

beautiful habits, which are of the corollaries of rational opinions and the inferences of the practical rational faculty, and hiding them by means of cognitive devices. *And their Lord called them: 'Did I not prohibit you:* the form of the prohibition is that which has become fixed in intellects in the way of inclination to disengagement and the perception of intelligibles and the staying away from substrata and sensory objects. And His statement to them, "*Verily Satan is a manifest enemy to you*"?, is what He has inspired in the intellect in terms of negating the judgements of estimation and opposing its perceptions and being aware of its contraventions and haughtiness towards it [the intellect]: His call to them in these [words] is to point out this signification by means of the mind and to remind [them] of it after [their] attachment and immersion in physical pleasures upon [attaining] maturity and the manifestation upon them of the lights of the intellect and understanding. As for their saying:

[7:23] *They said, 'Our Lord, we have wronged our souls:* this is the realisation of the rational-speech soul of its deficiency with regard to physical nature and the extinguishing of its light, the breaking of its potency and the actualisation of motivation in it to seek perfection through disengagement; *and if You do not forgive us,* by dressing us with spiritual lights and effusing them so that they radiate upon us, *and have mercy on us,* by effusing [upon us] gnoses of realities, *we shall surely be among,* those who have destroyed [their] original preparedness, which is the substratum of felicity and subsistence, by expending it in the abode of annihilation, and [we shall be among] those who have been deprived of perfection through disengagement by [our] adherence to the deficiency of physical nature.

[7:26] [*O Children of Adam! We have sent down on you*] *a garment to conceal your shameful parts,* that is to say, a divine law that covers up the vile aspects of your descriptions and the lewdness of your acts, *and feathers,* that is, beauty that will distance you from any likeness to neglected cattle and that will adorn you with virtuous character traits and beautiful acts, *and the garment of God-fearing,* that is, the attribute of abstinence and caution against the attribute of the soul, *that is better,* than the sum total of the pillars of the law, since it is the fundament and the basis of religion, much like [the role of] a restrictive diet in treatment [of maladies]; *that is one of God's signs,* that is, one of the lights of His attributes, since avoidance of the attributes of the soul is not actualised and is not facilitated except by the manifestation of the self-disclosures of the attributes of the Truth. This is what they [in the community] refer to when they say: 'God does not dispose of something that belongs to a servant except that He compensates him with something better of the same type'; *perhaps they will remember,* at the manifestation of the self-disclosures of your original spiritual garment, or the



vicinity of the Truth which you used to inhabit by the guidance of the lights of the attributes.

[7:27] [*O Children of Adam!*] *Let not Satan seduce you*, away from entering the Garden and remaining adhered to it by stripping you of the garment of the divine law and feigning strength [over you], *as he caused your parents to go forth*, from it, by stripping [them] of the luminous garment of primordial nature.

[7:29] *Say: 'My Lord enjoins justice*, that is, equity and uprightness. *And set upright your countenances*, your existing essences, by preventing them from inclination and deviation towards the two sides of immoderation and excess in justice and from [any] variegations in uprightness, *in every place of worship*, that is, every station of prostration or moment of prostration. Prostration can be divided into four divisions: 1) the prostration of compliance, obedience and establishing the countenance there through sincere devotion (*ikhblās*) and the avoidance of show and hypocrisy with regard to deeds performed for God and [the avoidance of] turning one's attention to other [than God] in those [deeds], as well as being mindful that the affair and the sincerity of the intention are in harmony, and avoiding contravention [of God] in all affairs, that which is justice; 2) the prostration of annihilation in the acts and the establishing of the countenance there by fulfilling what is due to that such that the person sees no effective agent other than God and sees no effect [as being] from himself or from any other; 3) the prostration of annihilation in the attributes and the establishing of the countenance there by observing its requirements in such a way that he does not see the adornments of his essence therein nor desire or loathe anything, [but] without inclining towards immoderation by abandoning the enjoining of decency and the forbidding of indecency, nor towards excessive wrath against the one in contravention; 3) and the prostration of annihilation in the Essence and establishing the countenance there by being absent from remnants and by being obliterated totally and by refraining from affirming ego and duality so that he does not become insolent by means of the veil of egoism nor engage in heresy by disregarding the law and abandoning obedience; *and call upon Him, devoting your religion to Him*, at the first station by singling it out for performing deeds for God [alone], and at the second and third [stations] by seeing religion and obedience as being from God, and at the fourth [station] by seeing these through God, such that God becomes the object of his religion and none other than Him having any share thereof. *As He brought you into being*, by manifesting you and hiding Himself, *so you will return*, by your annihilation in Him and your becoming hidden so that He might become manifest.

[7:30] *A party, He has guided*, them to this path, *while another party have deserved*, the word of, *misguidance*, due to the fact that they have taken the devils of the ego-centric faculties, both the estimative and the imaginative, *as patrons instead of God*, because of the correspondence of their essences in terms of their darkness, sulliedness and remoteness from the core essence of light to these [patrons] and [because of] the genus correspondence that exists between them in terms of dependence on the lower aspect and inclination towards the ornaments of physical nature; *and they suppose that they are guided*, since the authority that estimation exercises is over supposition.

[7:31] [*O Children of Adam!*] *Don your adornment at every place of worship*, that is, adhere to [donning] it and commit to it. The adornment of the first station of prostration is to be sincere in devoting deeds to God; the adornment of the second station is trust and being mindful of its requirements; the adornment of the third station is to fulfil what is due with regard to satisfaction; the adornment of the fourth station is fixity in verifying by means of the reality that comes from the Truth and being mindful of the dues of uprightness and its requirements; *and eat and drink, but do not be excessive*, by observing the rule of justice regarding it.

[7:32] *Say, 'Who has forbidden the adornment of God which He has brought forth for His servants*, that is to say, who has forbidden them from the genus of the aforementioned absolute adornment and said that they cannot adorn themselves therewith and has considered that impossible on their part insisting that God is the one forbidding them, *and the good things*, in the way of the sustenance consisting of the knowledge of sincere devotion and the knowledge of the station of trust, satisfaction and fixity? [*Say: 'These, on the Day of Resurrection, shall be purified*, from the blemish of variegations and the manifestation of any remnant of acts, attributes or essence.

[7:33] *Say: 'My Lord forbids only indecencies*, that is to say, the vices of the bestial faculty, *and sin, and wrongful insolence*, namely, the vices of the predatorial faculty, *and that you associate*, to the end [of the verse]: that is to say, the vices of the angelic rational-speech faculty, since these are ego-centric attributes that bar from the aforementioned adornments that are the human perfections that stand in contrareity to them.

[7:35] *Then whoever is wary and makes amends*, that is, [whoever] is wary of any remnants at the annihilation and makes amends by being upright at the annihilation, *no fear shall befall them, neither shall they grieve*, since they will be at the station of sanctity.

[7:36] *And those who deny Our signs*, that is, [those] who have obscured Our attributes by the attributes of their souls, *and scorn them*, by engaging in devilry, *those shall be the inhabitants*, of the fires of privation.

[7:46] *And between them is a veil*, that is, among the people of the Garden and among the people of the Fire there is a veil by which each one of them is veiled from the next person. What is meant by the people of the Garden here is the people who receive the reward for deeds in the way of the pious ones, the ascetics and the devout whose Garden shall be the garden of souls, otherwise they are the people of the garden of hearts and spirits who are not veiled from the people of the Fire. *And on the Heights*, that is, at the topmost part of that veil, which is the veil of the heart that separates the two parties, one to the right and another to its left, *there are men*, the knowers, the folk of God and His elect, *who know each*, one of the two parties, *by their mark*: they greet the inhabitants of the Garden by extending [to them] the causes of purification, adornment and the lights of the heart and [by] effusing good things and blessings upon them. They have not yet entered the Garden because of their being disengaged from the garments of the attributes of souls and their goodly things and [because of] their rising above their stage such that no bliss can distract them from the presential vision of the Essence and the contemplation of the self-disclosures of the attributes; *although they aspire*, that these enter [it] so that they might acquire something of their light and be illumined by the rays issuing from the countenances of these and find intimacy in their presence.

[7:47] *And when their eyes are turned towards the inhabitants of the Fire*: in other words, they do not look at them willingly or out of any compassion, mercy or satisfaction rather out of loathing and in passing, as though something had made their eyes turn to [look at] them; *‘Our Lord, do not assign us with the evildoing folk’*, that is, *do not cause our hearts to deviate after You have guided us* [Q. 3:8], just as the Commander of the Believers ‘Alī, peace be upon him, said, ‘I seek refuge with God from misguidance after guidance’. The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, ‘Lord God, establish my heart firmly upon Your religion’, whereupon it was said to him, ‘But has not God forgiven you your past sins and those that will be?’, to which he replied, ‘And what would assure me that the likeness of the heart is not as the likeness of a feather in an open expanse the winds turning it over as they wish?’.

[7:52] *And indeed We have brought them a Book, which We have detailed with knowledge*, that is, [We have given them] the human body, which is differentiated into limbs, extremities, organs and senses which can be used to attain perfection in accordance with what is decreed by Divine knowledge. The interpretation of this

[verse] is [that it is a reference to] what is fulfilled by His command in the final sequel such as the transformation [of this body] into what cannot be used for that [perfection] at the Gathering in terms of configurations, forms and figures that correspond to their attributes and beliefs commensurate with His statement *He will assuredly requite them for their descriptions* [Q. 6:139] and where He says *And We shall assemble them on the Day of Resurrection on their faces, blind, dumb and deaf* [Q. 17:97].

[7:54] ***Surely your Lord is God, Who created the heavens and the earth in six days***, that is to say, He became hidden in the forms of the heaven of the spirits and the earth of bodies in six thousand years, because of His statement, exalted be He, that *And truly a day with your Lord is like a thousand years of your counting* [Q. 22:47], in other words, from the time of the creation of Adam to the time of Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon them both — for creation is the concealment of the Truth in the manifestation loci of creatures. This duration, from the incipience of the cycle of concealment to the incipience of manifestation, which is the time of the sealing of prophethood and the manifestation of sainthood, as he [the Prophet] said, ‘Indeed time has come full circle to how it was configured on the day in which God created the heavens and the earth’. For the incipience of concealment in creation is the end of manifestation and so when concealment turns into manifestation, one has then returned to the beginning of creation, as has already been mentioned. Manifestation will be complete with the emergence of the Messiah (*mahdī*), peace be upon him, completing the seven days, which is why they say that the duration of this world is seven thousand years; ***then He presided upon the Throne***, that is, the throne of the Muḥammadan heart by means of complete self-disclosure therein in all of His attributes, as has been mentioned with regard to the meaning of *ṣād*. ***He cloaks***, the night of the body and the darkness of physical nature with the day of the light of the spirit ***each following the other***, by configuring itself and preparing to receive it, its constitution in equilibrium, swiftly, while the sun of the spirit, the moon of the heart and the stars of the senses, ***have been made subservient by His command***, which is the affair mentioned where He says *every day He is upon some affair* [Q. 55:29]. ***Verily, to Him belongs***, the power of existention and disposal with wisdom; or [it means] verily to Him belongs engenderment and creation from nothing. If one is to understand the [reference to the] heavens and the earth according to the literal meaning then the six days are the six aspects, since the events are referred to by the [word] ‘days’, as in where He says *and remind them of the Days of God* [Q. 14:5], that is to say, [of] the creation of the world of bodies in all six aspects, whereupon He rose to mastery over the Throne by exercising [His] effect through It by fixing the forms of engendered things in It. There is an

exoteric and an esoteric aspect to the Throne. The exoteric one is the ninth heaven in which are etched the forms of engendered things in their entirety and whose existence and non-existence pertains to the effacing and the fixing therein, as will be mentioned, God willing, in the interpretation of His words *God effaces what He will and fixes* [cf. Q. 13:39]. The esoteric aspect [of the Throne] is the First Intellect on which are engraved the forms of things in a universal way, the one referred to as the ‘innermost interior of the Throne’ (*buṭnān al-‘arsh*), as has been related — ‘A crier calls out from the innermost interior of the Throne’— being the locus of the Preceding Decree (*al-qadā’ al-sābiq*). The presiding over It [the Throne] then means [His] proceeding to take mastery over It through the exercising of effect in bringing thing into existence by fixing their forms upon It, a proceeding that is firm without turning to anything else *creation and the command. Blessed be God, the Lord of the Worlds!*

[7:73] [*And to Thamūd their brother Ṣāliḥ. He said*] ... *this is the she-camel of God, a sign for you*: the she-camel to Ṣāliḥ, peace be upon him, is like the staff to Moses, peace be upon him, and the ass to Jesus, peace be upon him, and the winged steed (*burāq*) to Muḥammad, peace be upon them. For each prophet and others there is a mount which is that person’s very animal soul and which carries his reality which is the human soul and its predominant attribute is the attribute that qualifies that particular animal and thus its [the animal’s name] is applied to that individual’s [soul]. Thus the one whose soul tends to obedience and compliance out of sheer tractability, able to bear, strong and submissive, then his mount will be a she-camel. Its [the she-camel’s] attribution to God [in ‘the she-camel of God’] is because it is commanded by Him, specifically His in terms of its obedience to Him and nearness. As regards what is said [in Q. 54:28] to the effect that the water was to be divided between her and them, one day she would drink, and on the other they would drink, this is an allusion to the fact that the source from which they drank was the practical rational faculty, while hers was the considerative rational one. And as regards what has been related that on her drinking day, she would become heavy with milk, so much so that when she was milked they could fill all their trays, this is an allusion to the fact that this person’s soul would extract from his primordial universal knowledge, by means of consideration, knowledge that profits those who are deficient in terms of their knowledge of character traits, divine laws and refined manners. Her [the she-camel’s] emergence from the rocks represents its manifestation from the body of Ṣāliḥ, peace be upon him. That is the [allegorical] interpretation [of the verse], though it is obligatory to affirm the exoteric meaning. For the manifestation of miracles and the breaking of the habits [of physical nature] is a truth, of which we can deny no aspect. What supports the [allegorical] interpretation is

the Prophet's comparison of the one who hamstrung her with the one who slew 'Alī, peace be upon him, when he said, 'O 'Alī: do you know who the most wretched of the former generations is?'. He ['Alī] said, 'God and His Messenger know best'. He [the Prophet] said, 'The one who hamstrung the she-camel of Ṣāliḥ'. He then said, 'Do you know who the most wretched of the later generations is?', to which 'Alī replied, 'God and His Messenger know best'. He [the Prophet] said, 'The one who will slay you'. It is also reported that he [the Prophet] said [to 'Alī], 'The one who will stain this with the blood of this', pointing with his hand to ['Alī's] beard and head.

[7:107] *Then he [Moses] cast down his staff*: the apparent meaning of this is Moses's miracle [to them], as is related. The allegorical interpretation is that the staff is an allusion to his soul, on which he supports himself, that is, on which he depends for animal motions and acts and with which he shakes down for the sheep of the sound bestial faculty the leaves of beautiful manners, excellent traits and praiseworthy habits from the tree of consideration [cf. Q. 20:18]. Because of his virtuous governance and disciplining of it, his soul complied with his actions, obedient to his commands, restrained from its animal acts, except with his permission, just like the staff. When he cast it down during the showdown with [his] disputants, it [the staff] became like a serpent swallowing the false lies they were inventing and fabricating in the way of the ropes of their doubts [cf. Q. 26:44-45], [doubts] which governed their motivations, and the staffs of their errors and fanciful adornments which they held onto during the contest to establish their goals, thus overwhelming them and vanquishing them.

[7:108] *And he drew forth his hand*, that is, he manifested his dazzling power which spellbound them and manifested the light of the truth of his summoning. It seems that the prevailing [art] in his time was sorcery, which is why he came out with the divine magic, while the prevailing [art] in the time of Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him, was rhetorical eloquence, which is why his miracle was the Qur'ān. In the time of Jesus, peace be upon him, it was medicine, and so he brought them the divine medicine, as has been related, since each prophet's miracle must necessarily be of the genus of what is the prevalent aspect of his time, so that he might be more successful in having his call responded to.

[7:142] *And We appointed for Moses thirty nights*: it is said that He commanded him to fast for thirty [days]. Upon completing [this] he was repelled by the aftertaste in his mouth. So he cleaned his teeth, but God reprimanded for that and commanded him to add another ten days [of fasting]. It is also said that He had commanded him to seek nearness to Him with what he will do in the thirty days [in the way of fasting] and that He then revealed the Torah to him in the last [additional] ten days, thus completing

forty. The first [report] alludes to that he was rid of the veil of acts, attributes and essence during the thirty days but there remained in him a remnant whose existence he could not be rid of, and so his use of the toothbrush is an allusion to the manifestation of that remnant where he says:

[7:143] *'My Lord! Show me that I may behold You!'*. As for the second [report], that alludes to that he had attained the complete presential vision of the essence after the thirty days through his wayfaring to God and there did not remain in him any remnant; rather, he was annihilated totally and in the last ten days he completed his wayfaring to God until such time as he was provisioned with subsistence through God after annihilation by way of the recovery of his senses. Accordingly, his statement, 'My Lord! Show me that I may behold You', must have issued from him at the time of the thirty days, while the recovery of the senses was after that, during the completion of the forty. God spoke to him directly at the station of the self-disclosure of the attributes. His words, 'My Lord! Show me that I may behold You', arose from extreme yearning on his part for the presential vision of the essence at the station of the annihilation of the attributes together with the existence of some remnant. *'You shall not see Me:* an allusion to the impossibility of a duality and of the subsistence of the ego at the station of the witnessing, similar to the saying: 'When I am absent, He appears; but when He appears, He makes me disappear', and the saying, 'I saw my Lord with the eye of my Lord'. *But behold the mountain,* that is, the mountain that is your existence, *and if it remains [standing] in its place,* then your vision of Me shall be made possible, this [statement] being conditional upon something that is [in fact] impossible. *He levelled it to the ground,* that is, vanishing without any existence in the first place, *and Moses fell down,* from the degree of existence, annihilated. *And when he recovered his senses,* by means of the existence that is endowed by the Truth upon subsistence after annihilation, *he said, 'Glory be to You,* [above] that You should be something visible to any other than You, [or] perceptible to the eyes of temporally created beings. *I repent to You,* of the sin of remnant, *and I am the first of the believers'*, in terms of level, not in terms of time. In other words, I am in the first file of the files of the [various] levels of spirits, which is the station of the folk of [God's] unity, being the station of pure election. As for His words,

[7:144] *'I have elected you from among mankind for My messages,* this is the first degree of prophetic calling (*istinbā'*) that follows sanctity (*walāya*). *So take what I have given you,* through fixity, *and be of the thankful'*, by being upright in fulfilling the due of servanthood, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, [once] said, 'Should I not be a thankful servant?'

[7:145] [*And We inscribed for him*] *in the Tablets*, the Tablets being the differentiations of Moses's existence in the way of his spirit, his heart, his intellect, his consideration and his imagination. His casting them down in anger represents his being distracted from these [differentiations] and [his] neglecting of the judgements contained therein, just as one of us would judge to forbear virtuously and endure hurt then become forgetful when overcome by anger and not remember anything of his intellect in terms of his deed upon the manifestation of his soul. '*Take it then firmly*, that is, resolutely, so that you might be of the resolute [from among the messengers] [cf. Q. 46:35], *and enjoin your people to adhere to the fairest [precepts] in it*, that is, to [adhere to] those things [in them] that require resolve as opposed to the dispensations. *I shall show you the abode of the wicked*, that is, the sequel for those who do not adhere to them.

[7:146] *I shall turn away from My signs those who behave with superiority in the earth without right*, because acting superior is of the attributes of the soul and so at the station of the soul they are veiled from the signs of the attributes which are located at the station of the heart; but [He does not mean] those who act with superiority with right, those who have acquired the attribute of superiority at the station of effacement and annihilation where God's superiority has come to stand in place of their superiority, as Ja'far al-Şādiq, peace be upon him, in response to someone who had said to him: 'You possess every excellent quality, except that you also act with superiority', to which he [Ja'far] replied, 'I am not acting as superior, but it is that the superiority of God, exalted be He, has come to stand in me in place of [my] superiority'.

[7:147] *Those who deny Our signs and the encounter in the Hereafter*, that is, those who have concealed Our attributes with their attributes and Our acts with their acts and have stopped at the effects and become blind to the encounter of the Hereafter and to the Garden of the souls and the acts; *their works have failed*, for had the denial of the attributes been disengaged from the denial of the encounter in the Hereafter, their works would not have failed, even if they were to be chastised for a while with some type of punishment.

[7:155] [*And Moses chose of his people*] *seventy men*, from among their most honourable [men] and those of noble descent, the folk of preparedness, purity of soul and volition, as well as [the spiritual] pursuit and wayfaring, being those who succumbed to the thunderbolt where He says *So the thunderbolt seized them* [Q. 4:153]; *but when the Trembling seized them*, that is, the trembling of the mountain of the body, which [trembling] constitutes the incipience of the thunderbolt of annihilation when the flashes of the [divine] lights are hurled into flight and the risings of the self-disclosures



of the attributes are manifested in the way of the shuddering of the body, and its being affected and made to tremble by these. That is why Moses at that instance said, '*My Lord, had You willed You would have destroyed them long before, and me [with them]*', since Moses would not be able to say anything at the moment of the thunderbolt, nor would they, because they will have been annihilated. As for his words, 'My Lord, had You willed', these are words of exasperation and loss of patience arising from the overwhelming feeling of yearning during the pain of separation [from God], as Muḥammad, peace be upon him, said [when he was] in a similar situation, 'Would that my mother had never borne me', and likewise, 'Would that the Lord of Muḥammad had never created Muḥammad', giving serious thought [as he did] to throwing himself off [the side of] the mountain. The [particle] *law* here is optative. *Will You destroy us*, by prolonging [our] veiledness, and by means of the chastisement of privation and the pain of separation, *for what the foolish ones among us have done?*, in the way of worshipping the calf of the vain desire of the soul and being veiled by its attributes, or by what has issued from us while we were fools, prior to our coming to our senses, perceiving and desiring to wayfare and [before] the manifestation of the light of insight and [our] taking heed, in the way of stopping with the soul and [undertake] to purify it. *It is but Your trial*, in other words, this testing [of us] with the attributes of the soul and the worship of vain desire is nothing but Your test, no one other than You having any part therein, [a trial], *whereby You send astray whom You will*, from among the folk of veils, wretchedness, ignorance and blindness, *and guide whom You will*, from among the folk of felicity, solicitude, knowledge and guidance — he [Moses] said this at the station of the self-disclosure of the acts — *You*, are the One who takes charge of our affairs, the One who manages them, *so forgive us*, the sins of our attributes and essences, just as You have forgiven us the sins of our acts, *and have mercy on us*, by effusing the lights of the vision of You and lifting the veil of whereness (*ayniyya*) with Your existence, *for You are the Best of all who show forgiveness*, since Your forgiveness is complete,

[7:156] *And prescribe for us in this world a good thing*, justness and uprightness through subsistence after annihilation, *and in the Hereafter [another] good thing*, [such as] witnessing and more. *We have turned*, returned, *to You*', from the sins of our existence. *He says: 'My chastisement*, that is, the chastisement of yearning that is specific to Me and that is actualised from My part, even if it should be painful, because of the severity of the pain of separation, it is a mighty and dangerous matter — *I smite with it whom I will*, from among My servants who are the folk singled out for My solicitude, *and My mercy embraces all things*, and is not singled out for any one person

to the exclusion of another or any one thing to the exclusion of another. So contained in this chastisement is a mercy whose quintessence cannot be known and whose worth cannot be estimated, the mercy of the pleasure of arrival, regarding which He has said, 'No soul knows what has been hidden for it [of reward] that delights the eye', being also delightful in way that cannot be approximated by any other pleasure, as one of them once said:

'Every pleasure I have attained from Him, except the pleasure of the ecstasy of my chastisement'.

By God, this chastisement is dearer than red sulphur, and as for [that] mercy it is not excluded from anyone's share.

*And so I shall prescribe it*, complete and perfect, a special prescription from the Merciful, *for those who guard themselves*, against all veils and who bestow freely of what they have been provided of property, character traits, knowledge and states upon those who deserve them, *and those who believe in Our signs*, [those] who assume all of Our attributes, being,

[7:157] *those who follow the Messenger, the uninstructed Prophet*, at the end of time, that is, the Muḥammadans who in fear of God followed his description where He says to him *And you threw not when you threw but God threw* [Q. 8:17], and where He says *nor does he speak out of vain desire* [Q. 53:3], and where He says *The eye did not swerve, nor did it transgress [the bounds]* [Q. 53:17], and where, regarding the payment of alms, He says *and as for the beggard, do not drive [him] away, and as for your Lord's grace, proclaim [it]* [Q. 93:10-11], and where, regarding having faith in the signs, he [Muḥammad] said, 'I have been given the sum of all [excellent] speech and have been sent to complete the noblest character traits'.

[7:159] *And among the people of Moses there is a community*, namely, those who were the followers [of the Messenger], they are the ones who will prosper by [attaining] the complete [divine] mercy, and there is a community from among the people of Moses who are affirmers of Oneness, *who guide, people, by the truth*, not by their souls, *and judge according to it*, between people in [their] state of uprightness and fixity.

[7:163] [...] *how their fish would come to them on the day of their Sabbath floating at the surface; but on the day they did not observe the Sabbath, they would not come to them*: this is just like the state of the people of Islam in our time in terms of the confluence of all types of ego-centric shares, in the way of foods, drinks, distractions and sexual relations that are manifest in the markets, throughout the seasons, in public thoroughfares and at festivals during the days of congregation more than any other days,

all of which is nothing but a trial from God because of the moral corruption [of the times].

[7:179] [...] *These, they are like cattle*, by [their] having lost the capacity to perceive realities and gnoses which would draw them closer to God by means of the heart, and [like cattle] by [their] failure to take heed with [their] eyes and to remember and to understand with [their] ears — *nay, rather they are further astray*, by virtue of the devilry existing within them, that which necessarily results in distance [from God] because of the corruption of beliefs and the proclivity to plotting.

[7:180] *And to God belong the Most Beautiful Names*: it has already been mentioned how each Name represents the Essence combined with some attribute [of His] and [how] God governs every affair through one of His Names — *so invoke Him*, by that [Name] when in need of [the attribute of] that Name, either by the tongue of the state, as when an ignorant person seeking knowledge invokes Him by His Name ‘the Knower’, and the sick person seeking cure invokes Him by His Name ‘the Healer’, and the poor person seeking enrichment invokes Him by His Name ‘the Enricher’, each one of them by actualising the preparedness that is the prerequisite for the reception [of his invocation], due to the effective power which that Name has and the effect of that attribute; or [that one should invoke Him] by the tongue of the speech, as when that first person might say, ‘O Lord’, intending by that ‘O Knower’, since that Name is specific to His Lordship, or when that second person might intend by ‘O Lord’ ‘O Healer’, or when that third person might intend by ‘O Lord’ ‘O Enricher’; or [that one might invoke Him] by the tongue of the act, as when the seeking wayfarer might be invoking Him by his very acquisition of that [divine] attribute, such that if his knowledge [of Him] should be spent, he invokes Him by His Name ‘the Knower’, and if he should find the cure for his illness in Him and should he then ask Him to cure someone else by his assumption of the attribute of ‘healing’, he invokes Him by His Name ‘the Healer’, and if he should find himself of availed of his poverty through Him, he invokes Him by His Name ‘the Self-sufficient’. That is the invocation to which the affirmers of [His] Oneness from among believers have been enjoined: so let them heed this example; *and leave those who blaspheme His Names*, [those] who seek these attributes from other than Him and attach these [attributes] to that [other], thus committing idolatrous association with Him.

[7:187] [*They will question you about the Hour*]: what is meant by the Hour is the moment of the manifestation of the major resurrection, that is, the Essential unity, by the presence of the Messiah (*Mahdī*). But none except God knows that moment, as the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said regarding the time of the emergence of

the Messiah, 'Those who ascribe [to the Hour] a time are liars. By God, even when it comes it is also only God that knows it, just as [the case] is before its time comes'. *It weighs heavily in the heavens and the earth*, since the inhabitants of these are unable to embrace [any] knowledge of it.

[7:194] *Truly those on whom you call besides God*, whoever they may be, be they humans or otherwise, *are servants like you*, in terms of [their] incapacity and lack of effective agency; *call them then*, for something which God has not facilitated for you, *and let them answer you*, and facilitate it, *if you are truthful*, in attributing effective agency to other [than God], as in where the Prophet said to Ibn 'Abbās, 'Young man: be mindful of God and He will be mindful of you. Be mindful of God and you will find Him looking towards you. If you ask [for something], ask [it] of God. If you seek assistance, seek the assistance of God and know that if the [entire] community were to agree to benefit you with something they will not benefit you except with something that God will have prescribed for you, and that if they were to agree to harm you with something, they will not harm you except with something that God will have prescribed against you [already]. The [heavenly] pens have been put aside and the scrolls [of divine decree] have [had their ink] dried'.

[7:195] *Have they feet wherewith they walk*: an interrogative meant as a denial, in other words, do they have feet by which they do not walk, nay it is by God [that they walk or not], since it is He who makes them walk with them, as is the case with all of their other limbs. *Say: 'Call upon your associates*, from among the jinn or mankind, *then scheme against me*, if you can, for the One who is in charge of my affair, my Preserver and the One governing me is:

[7:196] *God Who*, instructs me by revealing [to me] the Book, *and He takes charge of*, every righteous one, that is, every one who subsists through Him in the state of uprightness. As has been related [in one report] by 'righteous person', according to the description of one of the prophets, is meant the one who subsists in the Truth through uprightness and fixity after annihilation in the source of the union, the one who upholds the amending of the species by the leave of the Truth.

[7:198] *And you see them staring at you, but they do not perceive*, in other words, if you were to call to guidance those from among the idolaters or others upon whose hearts there is a seal, they will not listen or obey. You will see how that despite the soundness of their perception and sight, they do not perceive the Truth nor your reality, because in reality they are blind in their hearts.

[7:199] *Indulge [people] with forgiveness*, that is, with what is painless and effortless for them and do not charge them with what is not easy for them; *and enjoin kindness*, that is, [enjoin] in a beautiful way, *and turn away from the ignorant*, without dignifying their ignorance. It is reported from Imam Ja'far al-Ṣādiq, may God be satisfied with him: 'God enjoined His Prophet to the noblest of character traits, and there is no verse in the Qur'ān which encompasses the noblest character traits better than this one'. He [Ja'far] said this because of the definitiveness of the evidence it contains for the affirmation of Oneness. For the one who witnesses the Owner of all forelocks [sc. humans] and how He disposes of His servants and that they in what they do and what they leave behind [they do so] through Him and through themselves, will not burden them or scrutinise them in the obligations with which they are charged, nor will he become wrathful in enjoining [them] to decency and forbidding indecency, nor be severe towards them, but instead will act with forbearance towards them.

[7:200] *And if any insinuation from Satan should provoke you*, that is, [if] some goading or powerful urge should impel you to dispute with them by seeing acts as issuing from them and ascribing sins to them, *seek refuge in God*, by witnessing and being present before His agency, *He is Hearing*, able to hear the conversations of the soul and the evil whisperings of Satan in the breast, *Knowing*, of intentions and secrets.

[7:201] *Truly those who are wary*, of idolatrous association, *when a visitation*, a call, *from Satan touches them*, [inciting them] to ascribe acts to other [than God], *they remember*, the station of the affirmation of unity and the witnessing of acts as being from God, *and then see clearly*, the agency of God, and so in their eyes there remains no Satan and no agent other than God.

[7:202] And their brethren, the devils who are the veiled ones, *they lead them further*, to ascribing acts to other than Him such that they never fall short of [engaging in] obduracy, pretence and ignorance.

[7:203] [*they say*,] '*Why have you not chosen one?*', that is, 'Why do you not summon it from your own self?'. *Say: 'I follow only that which is revealed to me from my Lord*, in other words, I do not create anything of my own doing, but simply communicate on behalf of God and I do not say except that which is revealed to me from Him, because I subsist through Him and not through my own soul.

[7:204] [*And when the Qur'ān is recited*] *listen to it*, that is, to God and do not listen except [to something] from Him, *and pay heed*, [turning your attention] away from the insinuations of the soul or otherwise, for the One who is speaking through it [the

Qur'ān] is God, *so that you might find mercy*, by the mercy of the self-disclosure of the Speaker in His speech through His attributes and His acts.

[7:205] *And remember your Lord*, [by being] present, *in your soul*: [this is] similar to His statement *verily there is for you a good example in the Messenger of God* [Q. 33:21], *humbly*, at the station of differentiation for the union, *and fearfully*, in the innermost secret of the soul, or fearfully lest the soul should have a share therein, *without speaking out loud*, that is, without that the humbleness and the remembrance should manifest themselves to you as being from you, but that you should be remembering of Him for Him at the morning of the manifesting of the light of the spirit, its radiance and overwhelmingness, and in the evenings of the overpowerings of the attributes and the faculties of the soul. *And do not be*, in any of [your] states, especially in the state of being overpowered by the soul and its attributes, *among those who are heedless*, of the presential vision of Essential unity.

[7:206] *Surely those who are with your Lord*, in [their] affirmation of [His] Oneness and annihilation in Him, subsisting through Him, those of uprightness, *are not too proud to worship Him*, by being veiled by I-ness (*ana'iyya*); rather, they witness the differentiation in the source of union and submit to Him, *and they glorify Him*, they exalt Him above any [idolatrous] association by denying I-ness, *and to Him they prostrate*, through complete annihilation and the obliteration of remnants and vestiges of egoism. And God is the Subsisting One after the annihilation of [all] creation.

## [8] al-Anfāl

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[8:1] *They question you concerning the spoils of war:* they veiled themselves with their acts and so objected to the act of God and His Messenger, that is, God's act as manifested in the locus of the Messenger. Accordingly they were commanded to guard against acts, in other words, to avoid them by seeing God's act [therein] and to set things right [between themselves] by effacing the attributes of the souls, which are responsible for producing their acts, [acts] which necessarily bring about conflict and disagreement, so that they might return to mutual affection [towards one other] and love [for one another] that stems from the heart by the manifestation of the different types of attributes; *and obey God and His Messenger*, by the annihilation of its [the soul's] attributes so that it might be easier for you to accept the matter with the volition of the heart, *if you are believers'*, with true faith.

[8:2] *Those who believe*, with true faith, *are only those who, when God is mentioned*, [meaning] the mention of the attributes intended for the heart and not the mention of the acts intended for the soul, *their hearts tremble*, they are affected by conceptualising within themselves the tremendousness, splendour, vanquishing power, superiority and the radiation of the lights of the self-disclosures of those attributes, *and when His verses are recited to them*, that is, [when] His attributes are disclosed to them in the loci of speech, *they increase their faith*, true [faith] by making them rise from the station of knowledge to that of the source [of union], *and who rely upon their Lord*, that is, they rectify the station of trust by the annihilation of acts and wish for it at the station of the annihilation of the attributes, for the rectification of each station is completed by rising from it and inspecting it from a station above it.

[8:3] *Those who observe*, the prayers of the presence of the heart by witnessing the attributes and rising through them by means of their self-disclosures, *and who, from that with which We have provided them*, in the way of the knowledge of trusting [in God] at the station of the annihilation of the acts, or the knowledge of the self-disclosures of the attributes by wayfaring in them, *expend*, by implementing them and effusing them upon those who deserve them.

[8:4] *Those, are the true believers*, [believing] with true faith. *For them are degrees with their Lord*, in the way of the levels of the attributes and the meadows of the Gardens of the heart, *and forgiveness*, from the sins of the acts, *and generous provision*, in the way of the self-disclosures of the attributes and knowledge of these.

[8:5] *As your Lord brought you forth*: in other words, this state, meaning, the state in which they are objecting to you, in terms of translocation, is like their objection when your Lord brought you forth [from your home], because they, having veiled themselves from the act of God with their acts, saw both acts as issuing from you and so were averse to your going forth just as they were averse to your being granted the spoils of war [by God]. Nor did they understand [the significance of] your Lord's bringing you forth, *from your home with the truth*, that is, garbed in the truth, going forth with it and not with your soul. In this way *bi'l-ḥaqq* ('with the truth') is a circumstantial qualifier of the direct object of [the verb] *akbrajaka* ('brought you forth'); or [it means] a going forth garbed in what is the correct action and wisdom.

[8:6] *They dispute with you concerning the truth*, veiled as they are by their acts and attributes, *after it*, the state of that [truth], *had become clear*, disclosed as it was on your person, or [it means] after the vestiges of that [truth] had become clear to them formerly through miracles, or by your apprising of them that victory shall be theirs;

[8:7] *but God willed that the truth be realised by His words*, that it [the truth] should be confirmed by means of His heavenly angels with whom He reinforced them.

[8:9] *When you sought help from your Lord*, declaring that your might and strength was [not from you but] from Him and turning away from the veils of your acts by attaining certainty in that [the power to] effect and strength come from Him, neither from you, nor from your enemies; *and He answered*, your call at the instant of that disengagement from the garb of acts and the attributes of the soul, with [the statement]: *'I shall reinforce you*, from the world of angelic beings by virtue of the correspondence in terms of genus of your hearts with that [world] at that instant, *with a thousand angels*, with a world from the dominion of vanquishing, that is, with the heavenly faculties and their spiritual beings, which in that state [that you were now in] corresponded to your hearts, as was alluded to already in [*sūrat*] *Āl 'Imrān* [Q. 3:124-5]. As for the difference in the numbers [of angels] in these two instances, this is either because what is meant is the great multitude [involved] and not the specific number, or because His saying here: *rank upon rank*', indicates that they are followed by another contingent of the same [angels]. As for their being reinforced [with these angels], this is either by their becoming embodied (*tajassud*) and imaginalised (*tamaththul*) in the forms of fighters, as for example when forms are imaginalised in dreams, such that they are awed by them, or by their effective and vanquishing powers reaching them such that they are destroyed and defeated.

[8:10] *And God did not appoint*, that reinforcement, *except*, as a good tidings, *for you*, of victory and as reassurance for your hearts when they connect to it upon disengagement



from the garb of the soul and its states. It is not that victory comes from it [the soul], for victory, *comes only from God*, but it is that [His] wisdom requires that [the sequence of] things are made dependent upon their causes; *surely God*, is powerful enough to bring assistance, victorious, *Wise*, doing that in accordance with the requirements of wisdom.

[8:11] *When He caused*, the slumber of the calming of the corporeal faculties and the ego-centric attributes, *to overcome you*, by the sending down of the divine peace as security from God and as a reassurance; *and sent down upon you*, the, *water*, of the knowledge of certainty, *from*, the heaven of the spirit, *to purify you thereby*, from the wickedness of the whisperings of the soul and the murmurings of illusion, *and to remove from you the evil*, of the whisperings, *of Satan*, and his attempts to instill fear [in you], *and to strengthen your hearts*, that is, to fortify your hearts with the strength of certainty and to calm your agitation, *and to make firm your feet*, for valour and firmness of foot in the face of fear and mortal danger can only be through the strength of certainty.

[8:12] *When your Lord inspired the angels, [saying], 'I am with you:* in other words, He was reinforcing the angelic realm (*malakūt*) with the realm of divine power (*jabarūt*), so that they would come to learn from the world of divine power that God was assisting them, *so make those who believe*, in the contiguous strengthening [from heaven], *stand firm. I shall cast terror into the hearts of the disbelievers*, [and they experience terror] by virtue of the fact that they are severed from the heavenly reinforcement and divine strengthening and that doubt and the force of illusion have taken mastery over them, *so smite above the necks:* in other words, make them firm by instructing them in the meaning of this and encourage them by casting these words unto them, or by showing them this action on your part, as the reported narrative has it.

[8:17] *You did not slay them:* He has instructed them in [divine] courtesy<sup>81</sup> and guided them to the annihilation of [their] acts by dispossessing them of the acts and confirming these as God's, exalted be He. As the Prophet was at the station of subsistence through the Truth, the act was ascribed to him in His words, *when you threw*, but then he is stripped of that act with [the words] *you did not throw*, confirming it instead as God's with His words: *but God threw*, in order to fulfil the meaning of

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<sup>81</sup> The *adab* here is the courtesy which the wise person acquires in giving everything its due, particularly in acknowledging that creation and what takes place in it constitutes the manifestation of the attributes and acts of God. His *ta'dīb* of them is the instilling in them of that awareness. Cf. Chittick's discussion of Ibn 'Arabī's exposition of this concept (Chittick 1989: 175).

differentiation at the source of the union, so that the thrower might be Muḥammad [but] through God, exalted be He, and not through his own soul. No part of the act is ascribed to them since if they had acted it would have been through their own souls, *and that He might try the believers with a fair test*, that is, with a beautiful gift, namely, the affirmation of the unity of the acts, being the reason why He did that; *surely God is Hearing*, of the whisperings of your souls [when you say]: ‘We slew them!’, *Knowing*, that it is [in fact] He who is the slayer, even if the act should have been made manifest in you as loci;

[8:20] *and do not turn away from Him while you are listening*, that is, do not turn away from Him even as you listen, since the effect of listening is understanding and believing in the truth [of what is being said], and the effect of understanding is volition and the effect of volition is obedience, and so it cannot be right to claim to be listening while [simultaneously] turning away, as the two cannot be combined. Therefore, adhere to obedience through volition if you are being truthful about your claims to be listening.

[8:21] *And do not be as those who*, claim to listen but are not in fact [listening] at all, veiled as they are from understanding and acceptance, like beasts, nay, the worst of beasts in the eyes of God given what is mentioned [in Q. 8:22].

[8:23] *For had God known of any good in them*, or any righteousness, that is, any preparedness to receive the perfection of their hearing, so that they might then understand, accept and be obedient [*He would have made them hear*]; *and had He made them hear*, despite the absence of any good in them, so that they came to understand, their understanding would [even then] have no effect in terms of [subsequent] volition and obedience, nay, they would have turned away quickly, since that understanding in them would be an accidental matter, something that would be quick to disappear, and not essential [in them]; *being averse*, in their essence, such that understanding and volition would not remain in them long, as the Commander of the Believers [‘Alī], may God be satisfied with him, said, ‘Seek wisdom, even if it should be from the hypocrites, for wisdom keeps faltering in the breast of the hypocrite until it comes to rest alongside its companions in the breast of the believer’. In other words, it [wisdom] cannot fix itself in his [the hypocrite’s] breast since here it is accidental and does not correspond with his essence.

[8:24] *O you who believe*, in the unseen, *respond*, through the cleansing and purification [of your souls], *when He calls you to that which*, gives life to your hearts in the way of true knowledge, or believe with the faith of verification; respond [to God] by wayfaring to God and in Him, when He calls you thereto in order to give you life thereby. That is [the meaning] if the response to God and to the Messenger is [intended as being] a

single response. But if the two are separate, then it means: respond to God inwardly and through the works of the heart, and to the Messenger outwardly and through the works of the soul. Or, respond to God by annihilation in the union and to the Messenger by being mindful of the dues of differentiation when He calls you to be upright for the sake of that which will give you life in that [call] in the way of subsistence through God. All of that should be before the disappearance of preparedness, for God comes in between a man and his heart at the disappearance of preparedness and the actualisation of veils upon the accumulation of rust [on the heart]. So seize the opportunity and do not delay in responding; *and that it is to Him that you shall be gathered*, whereupon He will recompense you from His attributes and His Essence in accordance with your effacement and annihilation.

[8:25] *And guard against a trial*, an idolatry and a veil, *which*, trial, *would certainly not fall upon those among you who do evil*, by eliminating [their] preparedness or diminishing it in order to use it where it does not belong, or to expend it for the sake of something other than the Truth, *exclusively*, by virtue of their being the evildoers alone. As for the meaning of ‘would certainly not fall upon’, it is proscriptive, in other words, if it should fall it would fall upon these exclusively, similar to where He says *and no burdened soul shall bear the burden of another* [Q. 6:164]. It is possible that the meaning might be that it would not fall upon them exclusively but would subsume them and others too by virtue of the evil of keeping company with them and the transfer of their vices to those who mix with them, as in where He says, exalted be He, *corruption has appeared in the land and on sea because of what people’s hands have perpetrated* [Q. 30:41]; *and know that God is severe in retribution*, by giving mastery to the dark configurations which their hearts have acquired over these [hearts] and veiling them from Him and chastising them therewith.

[8:26] *And remember when you were slight*, in worth, by virtue of your ignorance and your being severed from the lights of knowledge, *and oppressed in the land*, the land of the soul, *and were fearful lest men should snatch you away*, that is, the men of the sensory of faculties because of the weakness of your souls, *how He gave you refuge*, in the [Medinese] city of knowledge, *and reinforced you with His help*, at the station of the affirmation of the unity of the acts, *and provided you*, with the good things of the knowledge of the self-disclosures of the attributes, *that you might be thankful*, for the grace of knowledge and the self-disclosures, by wayfaring in Him.

[8:27] [*O you who believe*] *do not betray God*, by diminishing the former primordial covenant of affirming the Oneness [of God], *and*, betray, *the Messenger*, by diminishing [your] resolve and casting aside the subsequent compact, *and betray your trusts*, in the

way of the gnoses and realities which God has deposited in you in accordance with the pre-eternal original preparedness, [betraying these] by hiding them behind the attributes of the soul, *while you are aware*, of the fact that you bear these [trusts], or while you are aware that treachery is the worst and most despicable of vices.

[8:28] *And know that your wealth and your children are a trial*, that is, [they are] a veiling for you, by virtue of the fact that you are distracted thereby from God, or [that they are] a form of idolatry, because of the fact that you love them as you love God, *and that with God is a tremendous wage*, so seek this [wage] by disengaging from them and by being mindful of the dues of God in them.

[8:29] [*O you who believe*] *if you fear God*, by avoiding the breaking of the covenant and the loosening of resolve and the hiding of the trusts and the love of wealth and children, so that you might be annihilated in Him, *He will grant you a [means of] separation*, a light by which to distinguish between truth and falsehood, [granted from] the stage of the Discriminating intellect (*‘aql furqānī*), *and absolve you of your evil deeds*, that is, the deeds of your souls, *and forgive you*, your sins, that is, the sins of your essences, *and God is of tremendous bounty*, granting [you] the existence that is bestowed by the Truth and the Discriminating intellect.

[8:33] *But God was not about to chastise them*, because chastisement is the form and effect of wrath and can only result from the wrath of the Prophet or from the wrath of God, [itself] caused by the sins of the community. The Prophet, peace be upon him, was the form of mercy, because of where He, exalted be He, says: *And We did not send you except as a mercy to all the worlds* [Q. 21:107], which is why when they [the Meccan enemy] broke his two front teeth, he [only] responded by saying, ‘O God, guide my people, for they do not know [what they do]’, and did not become wrathful, as did Noah, peace be upon him, when he said *My Lord, do not leave from among the disbelievers a single dweller upon the earth* [Q. 71:26]. Therefore his [Muḥammad’s] presence among them is protection [for them] against the sending down of chastisement [on them], as is the existence of forgiveness-seeking. Thus the principal cause for chastisement, given that the [simultaneous] existence of sin and forgiveness-seeking is a barrier to the accumulation of sin and to its become established — indeed, it necessarily brings about its disappearance — does not result in God’s wrath. And so as long as there is forgiveness-seeking among them, they will not be chastised.

[8:34] *But what [plea] have they now, that God should not chastise them*: in other words, the fact that the chastisement is not sent down is not because they do not deserve it in terms of [the state of] their souls. Nay, they deserve [it] by their essences and because of their issuing forth [with sin] and their barring of those who are prepared from the

station of the heart and for there no longer existing any goodness in them. But your presence and the presence alongside you of the believers seeking forgiveness among them is preventing it. Know that contingent existence follows where goodness prevails, because necessary existence is pure good. And so that whose good outweighs its evil has existence through His existence on account of the correspondence [between them] in terms of goodness. But where evil prevails that correspondence would no longer remain and this [evil] must then necessarily be exterminated and annihilated. Thus as long as they remain in [this] combined form, good will be prevalent among them and they will not deserve destruction through chastisement. But if they were to become separated [from the believers] their evil will be pure [of any good], in which case they will have to be destroyed, as was the case in the incident at Badr. From this the verification of the second meaning becomes manifest with regard to where He says *And guard against a trial which would certainly not fall exclusively upon those among you who do evil* [Q. 8:25], by virtue of evil prevailing over the combined group in this case. That is why the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him: 'In the earth there were two securities. One of these was removed, while the other remained. As for the one that was removed, this was the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace. As for the one that has remained, this is the seeking of forgiveness', whereupon he recited this [above] verse; *they bar from the Sacred Mosque*: this is a conceptualisation of their act of barring and their turning away from its meaning, which is the heart, by residing with the soul and its attributes and of their barring from it of those who are prepared, by tempting them with ego-centric matters and the pleasures of physical nature; *though they are not its guardians*, by virtue of their remoteness from this attribute [of guardianship] and because the darkness of the soul has prevailed over them and its attributes have acquired mastery over them and because they have veiled themselves from this [sacred mosque] by the disbelief that they derive from religion. *Its only [rightful] guardians are the God-fearing*, who have guarded themselves against the attributes of the soul and its acts; *but most of them do not know*, that the House [of the Ka'ba] is the form of the heart, which is the House of God in reality and so only the God-fearing of the affirmers of Oneness deserve to be Its guardians and not the idolaters.

[8:41] *And know that whatever spoils you have taken, the fifth of it is for God*, to where He says *and God is severe in retribution* [Q. 8:48] cannot be submitted to [allegorical] interpretation according to the way in which the event is mentioned therein. If you did wish to effect a [spiritual] correspondence [of this passage] to the differentiations of your existence, one might be able to say the following: And know, O spiritual faculties,

that whatever spoils you acquire in the way of beneficial knowledge and the divine precepts on which Islam is founded, according to his [the Prophet's] statement: 'Islam is founded on five [things] ...' And so one fifth of that is for God — and that is the testimony that there is no deity except God and that Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, when considering the affirmation of Oneness at the [level of the] union — and for the Messenger of the heart; *and for the kinsman*, who is the innermost secret, and the orphans of the considerative and practical rational [faculty] and the faculty of disbelief; and the needy of the ego-centric faculties; *and the traveller*, who is the wayfaring soul which has entered into alienation<sup>82</sup>, procuring the waystations of the wayfaring, withdrawing far from its original resting-place, when considering the affirmation of Oneness at [the mode of] differentiation in the prophetic world. The remaining four fifths are divided among the limbs, the pillars and the natural faculties — *if you believe*, with true faith, *in God*, in the concentration (*jam'an*), *and that which We sent down upon Our servant on the Day of Discrimination*, at the moment of separation, after the union, at the [level of] differentiation, *the day the two armies met*, [the two armies] of the two parties, that of the spiritual faculties and that of the ego-centric ones, upon the return to the witnessing of differentiation at the [level of] union.

[8:42] *When you were on the nearer bank*, of the city of knowledge and the locus of the Discriminating intellect, *and they were on the yonder bank*, that is, in the lower aspect that is remote from the Truth and from the locus of knowledge, while the cavalcade of the distinguished natural faculties mounted upon the ego-centric faculties, *was below you*, that is, [below] the two parties; *and had you agreed to meet*, to do battle by means of the intellect and wisdom, instead of by means of spiritual discipline and the unity, *you would have surely failed to keep meeting*, by virtue of the fact that it would have been difficult in that case, necessarily bringing about failure and cowardice; *but that God might conclude a matter that was to be done*, [that] was predetermined, ascertained according to Him, whose eventuality was necessary. He did this, *so that he who perished might perish after a clear proof*, this [proof] being attached to the body that is necessarily perishing and imprinted on it, *and so that he who survived might live after a clear proof*, this being disengaged from him and conjoined to the world of the Holy, that is the core substance of real life and of everlasting subsistence.

[8:43] *When God showed them to you*, O heart, in the dream-state of the inactivity of the outer senses and the tranquility of the corporeal faculties, [showing them to you] as being of little worth and feeble in [their] state, *and had He shown them to you as many*,

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<sup>82</sup> Or 'exile'; see Chittick's discussion of this condition (1989: 267).

in the state of the attributes of the soul being prevalent, *you would have faltered and quarrelled*, over the matter of breaking it [the soul] and vanquishing it, as each one of you is attracted to a [different] direction; *but God saved [you]*, from faltering and quarrelling by means of His strengthening and protection [of you].

[8:47] *And do not be*, like the disbelieving ego-centric faculties, *who went forth from*, the dwellings of their resting-places, their loci and bounds in recklessness and to show off to people and to feign stamina against the senses.

[8:48] *And when*, the Satan of estimation, *adorned their deeds for them*, with [the false promise] that the kingdom of the heart and its faculties could be overcome, *and said: 'Today no person shall overcome you*, illuding them [into believing] that their wish would be realised by showing them that there is none from among the men of the senses that shall overcome them and that likewise would be the case with all the other faculties, *and I shall be your protector'*, reinforcing you and fortifying you and fend off the men of the spiritual faculties from you. *But when the two armies sighted each other, he turned his back in flight*, sensing the state of the spiritual faculties and their power to overcome by virtue of his correspondence to these [spiritualities] in terms of [his capacity of] perceiving [their] meanings, *saying, 'I am quit of you*, for I am not of your genus. *I see*, in the way of meanings and of the arrival of reinforcement to them from the heaven of the spirit and the angelic realm of the world of the Holy, *what you do not see. Verily I fear God*, as I sense some of His lights and His vanquishing, *and God is severe in retribution'*: herein is an allusion to the saying of the master of all messengers [Muḥammad], namely: 'Each person has a devil, except that my devil submitted [to *islam*] at my hands'.

That is the instruction and the model [to be followed] in similar cases where a seeker wishes to effect a correspondence between the stories [of the Qur'ān] and his own states. However, I shall rarely repeat the like of this [intepretation] henceforth because other than conceptualising the path of wayfaring and having the initiate imagine what he faces [along this path] with a view to energising him to rise and ascend [through the states], there is little in the way of a useful lesson [therein]. And God is the Guide.

[8:50] *And if you could only see when the angels receive the disbelievers [at death]*: the receiving at death [of souls] by the angels has already been mentioned, as has the fact that this only takes place in the case of those who are at the station of the soul. As for those who are disobedient and who have been overcome by the attributes of the soul, [attributes] such as wrath, rancour, passionate desire, covetousness and the like of these from among the despicable character traits, they will be received [at death] by the

vanquishing angels and those of chastisement as corresponds to the configurations of their souls, *beating their faces*, for their having veiled themselves from the world of lights and having turned away therefrom and for the configurations in these [souls of theirs] of haughtiness, pride and arrogance, *and [beating] their backs*, for their inclination and extreme attraction to the body and the world of nature and for the configurations of passionate desire, covetousness and greed [that are in them], *and [they say]: 'Taste the chastisement of the Burning*, that is, the burning of privation and the mastery held [over them] by the fires of [their] toil and pursuit, now forsaken, for that they had acquired those configurations which necessarily result in that [chastisement]. But if that person is from among the folk of obedience and those upon whom have prevailed the lights of the attributes of the heart, [attributes] such as tenderness, compassion, soundness and contentment and the likes of these from among the excellent qualities of the two faculties, the predatorial and the bestial, to the exclusion of the excellent quality of the rational-speech faculty, then in that case, he will be a person of the heart, [one] not at the station of the soul, [the likes of this person] will be received [at death] by the angels of mercy, *while they are goodly, saying [to them], 'Peace be upon you! Enter Paradise for what you used to do'* [Q. 16:32], because the configurations of their souls correspond to the spiritual beings of the world.

[8:53] *That is because God would never change a grace that He had conferred on a people*, to the end [of the verse]: in other words, all that reaches man is [only] that which his preparedness entails and what he requests by the supplications of his state and by the requesting of is deserved [by him]. Thus when He confers upon a person an outward or an inward grace by virtue of the soundness of [his] preparedness and the remainder of goodness in him, He does not change it until that [person] corrupts his preparedness and changes his receptivity for righteousness by veiling himself and by the transmutation of the good that is in him in potentiality into evil because of the actualisation of rust [on his heart] and the accumulation of darkness therein, such that there no longer remains in him any correspondence to good nor any possibility for it to issue from him, whereupon He will change that [grace] into a disfavour, as an act of justice and generosity from Him and in response to the demand made for it by that preparedness by virtue of the attraction in terms of genus and correspondence, and not out of any injustice or tyranny [on His part].

[8:62] *He it is Who strengthened you with His help and with the believers;*

[8:63] *and reconciled their hearts*, because of their concord in terms of orientation and their deliverance from the shackles of the attributes of the soul which necessarily entail backsliding and obduracy by virtue of their residing in the world of contrareity and the



difference between them in terms of nature. For the heart, as long as it halts with the soul and its desires and [as long as] it has acquired mastery over it by its attributes, it will attract it down towards the lower aspect and will render its [the heart's] goals particular in line with what corresponds to its best interests, such that it [the heart] ends up demanding what is forbidden it by another [heart], whereupon mutual enmity and hatred ensues [between them], and the irascible faculties that seek repute, honour, vanquishing power, victory, leadership and authority will then hold sway and haughtiness, obstinacy, pride and disdain will result, leading to a mutual boycotts, alienation, warring and quarrelling. But every time it moves further away from the lower aspect by orienting itself towards the upper aspect and towards being illumined by the lights of unity of the attributes or that of the Essence, it [the heart] will rise higher from the station of the soul and will connect to the spirit and its goals will become universal, no longer being mutually exclusive or the object of rivalry, because of the possibility [now] of its being actualised for one [heart] without depriving another from it, and it [the heart] will then incline towards another with whom there is genus-correspondence in terms of purity, [inclining towards the other] with the love that derives from the essence because of the intensity of correspondence [between them]. The closer that it [the heart] is to the unity, the stronger the power of love in it, by virtue of its extreme propinquity to the one that follows its own religion, much like the radii that connect the circumference of a circle with its centre. Thus the intensity of affinity between these [hearts] is commensurate with the intensity of faith [in them]. *Had you expended all that is in the earth, you could not have reconciled their hearts*, because what is in the lower aspect [only] increases their mutual enmity and opposition by virtue of the intensity of their covetousness of, and their dogged rivalry over, it; *but God reconciled their hearts*, by means of the light of unity which bequeathes spiritual love and affinity of the heart. For love is the shadow of unity, mutual affinity the shadow of love, and justice the shadow of mutual affinity. *Truly He is Mighty*, with the power to repel the disbelievers and vanquish them by means of the coming together of the believers and their mutual harmony, *Wise*, doing that out of some wisdom in order to cast mutual affinity and love between these [believers] and [to cast] division and disagreement of opinion between those [disbelievers].

[8:72] *Truly those who believed and emigrated*, to the end [of the verse]: in terms of [overall] import, this [verse] indicates that the poor person who offers services at a khanqah and a [specific] locale is not obliged to service the one who is resident [there] but the traveller, because of His saying: *And those who believed but did not emigrate — you have no duty to make an alliance with them*, that is to say, those who believed with

cognitive faith and emigrated from all that is familiar in terms of relatives, children, property, causes and the abodes of the soul with the strength of resolve and have chosen to journey in exile, struggling with the power of certainty and trust [in God] by means of their wealth, by abandoning it and expending it in what satisfies God, and [struggling] with their souls by wearing them out through spiritual discipline and waging war against Satan, and by enduring the hardships of the journey for the sake of God and by expending these [souls] for the sake of religion with the intention of wayfaring to God. As for those who sheltered them [the wayfarers] by serving them at the home and assisted them by preparing for them the equipment that they need: *those are allies of one another*, by virtue of their mutual affinity and love; *and those who believed*, afterwards, *but did not emigrate*, from their familiar abodes, ‘you have no duty to make an alliance with them until they emigrate’ [Q. 8:72].

## [9] al-Tawba

[9:1] *A declaration of immunity from God and His Messenger*, [to the end of] the verse: when the Messenger was not able to sustain [his] uprightness because of the place of his variegation at times through the manifestation of his attributes and at other times because of the existence of remnants, as indicated by the Qurʾān in those instances of [the Prophet receiving] rebuke and being made firm, such as [in] His saying *he frowned and turned away* [Q. 80:1]; and His saying *And if We had not made you [stand] firm, certainly you might have inclined to them a little* [Q. 17:74]; [and His saying] *May God pardon you! Why do you give them leave...?* [Q. 9:43]; *It is not for any prophet to have prisoners* [Q. 8:67]; and when his [the Prophet's] companions from among the believers had not yet arrived at the station of the unity of the Essence, at times because of their veiling themselves with [their] acts and at other times with [their] attributes, there then was between them and the idolaters a correspondence, propinquity in terms of genus and a treaty, and thus by virtue of that genus-correspondence they made a covenant with them given that there was [this] connection between them. But when the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, and the believers then obey His words, exalted be He, *So be upright, as you have been commanded and those who repent with you* [Q. 11:112], and when he had attained the utmost in fixity and the veils of the acts, those of the attributes and those of the essence had been removed from the faces of the wayfarers among his companions until they were able to reach the station of the unity of the Essence, that correspondence between them and the idolaters was [also] removed, and there no longer remained any sort of correspondence between them. Thereupon contrareity and opposition was realised [between them] and separation and enmity became justified and so was revealed: *A declaration of immunity from God and His Messenger* [Q. 9:1] *to the idolaters with whom you made a pact*: in other words, this state, the state of total separation and enmity between us and the declaration of true immunity from God, from the point of view of the union, and [from] His Messenger from the point of view of the differentiation given to him. Thus they declared themselves quit of them outwardly just as they were quit of them inwardly and they cast off their covenant [with them] formally just as they cast off the covenant with them in reality.

[9:2] *Journey freely in the land for four months*: commensurate with the number of their halting places in this world and in the Hereafter, by way of a warning for them. For since they halted in this world with the other in idolatrous association, they were veiled from religion and from the acts, the attributes and the Essence at the interstice of

the human realm (*nāsūt*), and so it became necessary for them to make them halt in the Hereafter before God, then before the realm of divine power, then before the angelic realm, then before the Fire in the blazing furnace of vestiges, as has already been alluded to in [*sūrat*] al-An‘ām, where they are chastised with all manner of chastisements; *and know that you cannot escape God*, by virtue of the fact that you must necessarily be detained at these halting places because you halted with the other in idolatrous association: how then can you escape Him? *and that God degrades the disbelievers*’, those who are veiled from the Truth by being disgracefully exposed upon the manifestation of the level of that which they used to worship besides God and its halting alongside [the disbeliever] before the Fire.

[9:3] *A proclamation*, an apprising, *from God and His Messenger to mankind on the day of the Greater Pilgrimage*, that is, at the moment of the manifestation of the union of the Essence in the form of differentiation, as has already been mentioned; *that God is free from obligation to the idolaters, and [so is] His Messenger*, in reality, and so the outward conforms to the inward.

[9:4] *Excepting those of the idolaters with whom you have made a pact, and who have not diminished [their commitment to] you in anyway*, in other words, this is a declaration of non-obligation towards them, except those [of them] in whom there remains some grip on preparedness or the vestige of a sound primordial nature and so are not involved in the breaking of any covenant, there remaining in them virtuous manliness, an indication of the soundness of [their] primordial nature and their adherence to God’s former covenant by virtue of the existence [within them] still of preparedness and the possibility [for them] of returning to the unity; *nor supported anyone against you*, because of the lingering presence [within them] of the original connection (*wuṣla*) and the primordial affinity between you and them and [because of] the non-manifestation of [in them] of that enmity which is earned (*kasbiyya*); *[as for these] fulfil your pact with them until the [conclusion of the] term*, that is, the term during which the rust accumulates [on their hearts] and [their] veil is realised should they not relent and repent. *Truly God loves those who fear [Him]*, those who have specifically avoided despicable traits, [such as] the breaking of a covenant, which is the mother of all despicable traits outwardly and inwardly.

[9:20] *Those who believe*, cognitively, *and have emigrated*, away from the desired sensory things and the abodes of the soul by wayfaring in the way of God and have struggled with those possessions of theirs that are their knowledge, their desired goals, and their abilities by effacing their attributes with the attributes of God, *and [with] their souls*, by

annihilating them in the Essence of God, *those they are greater in degree*, in terms of the affirmation of Oneness, *in the eyes of God*.

[9:21] *Their Lord gives them good tidings of mercy*, [of] the reward for deeds, *from Him and [divine] satisfaction*, [His] attributes, *for them shall be gardens*, from among the three Gardens, *wherein is bliss*, the presential vision of the Essence, *that is enduring*, fixed forever.

[9:23] *O you who believe, do not take your fathers*, to the end of this [verse]: in other words, do not let the aspect of formal kinship and natural connection prevail in you over the aspect of spiritual kinship and real connection such that there would then be between you and those from among your kin who prefer the veil to unveiling a friendship that results from a formal connection [but] with loss of spiritual connection and a difference in aspect which [in itself] necessarily brings about spiritual rupture and true enmity. This is a weakness of faith and feeble resolve: faith is the opposite of that. God, exalted be He, says: *but those who believe love God more ardently* [Q. 2:165]. A sage [once] said, 'The Truth is beloved to us and [His] creatures are beloved to us. But if the two are at variance, then the Truth is more beloved to us.

[9:24] *Say: 'If*, these formal ties of kinship and familiar sensory things, *are dearer to you than God and His Messenger*, then your faith stands weak and its vestige is not manifest in your souls or upon your limbs so as to comply with His judgements, and that is because you have halted with the vestiges of the human realm, [a halting] which would necessarily result in chastisement and veiling; *then wait until God brings about His*, chastisement. How can it be otherwise, when you follow the path of [physical] nature and abide by its judgements in place of the wayfaring on the path of the Truth and obeying His command. That is wickedness on your part, and the wicked one is veiled from God. He does not guide him to Him because of his failure to orient himself [towards God] and his lack of will, indeed, because of his refusal and his turning away, for which he deserves chastisement, being forsaken, veiling and privation.

[9:34] *And those who hoard up gold and silver*, to the end of this [verse]: the amassing of wealth and the hoarding of it without expending [any of it] can only be the result of the taking root [within that person] of the vice of avarice and love of property. As for every burning vice with which that person will be chastised in the Hereafter and suffer degradation in this world, because the substratum with which that vice becomes firmly rooted and established is itself that wealth, then it is that [wealth itself] which is heated in the fire of the Hell of [physical] nature and the abyss of vain desire and with which he is branded. These parts of the body are specified because avarice is concentrated in the soul and the soul overpowers the heart from these aspects, and neither from the

higher aspect which is the aspect in which the spirit has mastery and the passage for realities and lights, nor from the lower aspect which is from the aspect of corporeal nature because [physical] nature has no power over that. This leaves the remaining aspects from which he then suffers hurt through the four aspects and is chastised, and you also see that he is disgraced thereby in this world and degraded through these aspects, either by being confronted with it [his hoarding] openly so that he is exposed, or it is secretly mentioned to him from one side, or he is slandered for it from behind his back.

[9:46] [...] *God was averse that they should be sent forth, so He slowed them down*: that is to say, they were wretched and there did not remain any good in their preparedness such that God would desire it from them, which is why He was averse to their being sent forth. In other words, they belonged to the latter group, the wretched rejects of whom mentioned has been made more than once.

[9:61] [*And of them are those who injure the Prophet*] and say, '*He is only a listener!*': they used to injure the Prophet and slander him because of the goodness of [his] heart and his being quick to accept and believe what he hears and so He affirms the truth of that and submits to them that he [the Prophet] is indeed like that, but [he is so] in terms of goodness. For the recalcitrant, coarse, crude, loathsome and harsh soul that is unyielding in matters and is not affected is not one that is prepared for perfection, since human perfection can only be [attained] through acceptance, being affected and being acted upon. Thus the more that a soul's temperament is malleable, its heart sound and more given to acceptance, the more it is receptive to perfection and the more intensely prepared it is for that [perfection]. This malleability is not a type of weakness or simple-mindedness which entails being acted upon by all that one hears, even the impossible and being affected by all that he comes across and sees, even lies, evil and error. Rather, this [malleability] is a kind of gentleness and readiness to accept the goodness and truth that corresponds to him, which is why He says: *Say: 'A listener to good*, because the purity of preparedness and the gentleness of soul requires acceptance of what corresponds to him of good things and not what is incompatible with him in the way of evil. Good preparedness does not accept evil, is not affected by it nor imprinted upon it, being as it is incompatible with it and remote therefrom; *for you*, in other words, he listens to what is beneficial for you and that wherein lies your welfare and nothing else; *one who believes in God*: an explanation of his malleability and receptivity, since faith can only come with soundness of heart and the gentleness and malleability of the soul; *and has faith in the believers*, believing their statements concerning good things and listens to what they say regarding these and accepts it; *and*

*who is a mercy to those of you who believe*, being compassionate and tender towards them, delivering them thus from chastisement by purifying [them] and teaching [them], rectifying the matter of their mode of living and their final return through piety, dutiful contact and [by] teaching [them] virtuous character traits such as forbearance, compassion, enjoining decency by their emulating of him in that respect, and by laying down the divine prescriptions that bring about the [good] ordering of their affair in both abodes and inciting them to all kinds of piety, verbal and in terms of action, as well as in other ways.

[9:72] *God has promised the believers, both men and women, Gardens underneath which rivers flow*, being the Gardens of the souls, *and dwellings*, that are blessed, being the stations of the masters of trust [in God] in the Gardens of the acts, as evidenced in His words, exalted be He: *and a greater beatitude from God*, for beatitude belongs to the Gardens of the attributes. *That*, beatitude, *is the supreme triumph*, because of the nobleness of those who receive it in the eyes of God and their extreme closeness to Him.

[9:100] *And the first to lead the way*, that is, those who led the way to the unity from among the folk of the first rank, *of the Emigrants*, who have emigrated from the abodes of the soul, *and the Helpers*, who have helped the heart against the soul by means of true knowledge, *and those who follow them*, by acquiring the attributes of the Truth, *by being virtuous*, that is, by means of a witnessing from among the witnessings of the Beauty and the Majesty, *God will be pleased with them*, because they have all participated in the unveiling of the attributes and in arriving at the station of satisfaction, which is the greatest way to God; *and He has prepared for them Gardens*, from among the Gardens of the acts and the attributes — *with rivers*, of the knowledge of trust, satisfaction, and what corresponds to these two, *flowing beneath them*: this does not preclude the existence of another Garden for those who were the first to lead the way, this being the Garden of the Essence and their being singled out for it is because of the participation of the All therein.

[9:102] *And [there are] others, who have confessed their sins*: confession of sin is the preservation of the light of preparedness, a malleability of disposition and where the trait of sin has not taken firm root in that person, as he possesses the capacity to return and to repent as well as [possessing] the guiding proof [that allows] for perceiving the vileness of sin, which [perception] can only be through the light of insight and the opening of the eye of the heart. For if darkness were to accumulate and the vice were to take firm root, he would not deem it vile and would not perceive it as sin, nay, he would see it as being a virtuous act corresponding as it would be to his state. If he is

able to recognise the sin [as sin], then there is [still] some good in him; *they have mixed a righteous deed with another that was bad*, in other words they were at the level of the self-reproaching soul whose connection to the heart and illumination by its light so that this becomes a natural disposition has not occurred and which has not yet submitted in [complete] obedience to the heart, and so sometimes the heart has mastery over it and it does yield and becomes pliant and is illumined by its [the heart's] light and performs righteous deeds, while at other times it manifests itself through those attributes of its that veil the heart's light from it and veils itself with its darkness and performs evil acts. But if the lights of the heart and righteous deeds prevail over it and angelic thoughts come over it in succession such that its connection with the heart and its obedience to it as a natural disposition takes place, then its affair will be good and it will find salvation. That is the significance of His words: *It may be that God will relent to them*. However, if the dark configurations, which it earns from its being overcome [by its attributes] and its frequent engaging in evil deeds, accumulate in it, then the opposite will be the case: its preparedness will disappear totally and it will deserve everlasting chastisement. The prevalence of either of these sides over the other only comes as a result of companionship and keeping company with individuals from either of the two kinds and the mixing with good folk or evil folk. If, on the one hand, divinely-bestowed success reaches that person, destiny will lead him to the company of the righteous and the emulation of their character traits and deeds so that they become of them; if, on the other hand, forsakenness attaches to him, it will lead him to the company of the corrupt and to mixing with them so that he will end up one among the losers: may God give us refuge from such [a predicament]. *Truly God is Forgiving*, forgiving them their dark misdeeds and curtains these from them, *Merciful*, to them by facilitating [for them the performance of] righteous deeds and by accepting [their] repentance.

[9:103] Since they were also granted success to [being of] the former division<sup>83</sup> by the blessedness of companionship with the Messenger and his purification of them and his [moral] training of them, He says: *Take of their wealth some alms*, since wealth is the cause of the manifestation of the soul and of its being overpowered by its attributes and the [source of] reinforcement of its faculties and the substratum of its vain desires, as the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said: 'Wealth is the substance of passionate desires'. Thus their initial state must be one of disengagement from wealth so that the faculties of the soul might be broken and its vain desires and attributes might be weakened so as to be cleansed from the dark configurations that are in it and to be purified from the vileness of sins and the impurity of Satanic motivations. That is

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<sup>83</sup> That is to say, those who become righteous by keeping company with righteous folk.



the significance of His words: *to purify them and to cleanse them thereby, and pray for them*, by extending [your] aspiration [to include them] and by effusing the light of [your] companionship upon them; *truly your prayers are a peacefulness for them*, that is, truly the light that you effuse upon them by turning the attention of your mind to them and the potency of your aspiration and the blessedness of your companionship are the cause for the coming down of the divine peace (*sakīna*) upon them, their hearts finding peace therein and reassurance. The divine peace is a light that settles in the heart, remaining firm with it in the orientation to the Truth and by which certainty is strengthened and by which is removed that inconstancy which is the result of Satan's touch and his evil whisperings, as well as the conversations of the soul and its murmurings, since that person will no longer accept them then. *And God is Hearer*, hearing their humble beseechings and admission of their sins, *Knower*, of their intentions and resolve and of the remorse and distress in their consciences.

[9:108] [...] *A mosque which was founded upon [pious] fear of God*: since the world of the Kingdom is subject to the dominion of the world of the angelic realm and subjugated to it, the intentions and configurations of souls must concomitantly exercise an effect upon the deeds it engages in. Thus everything that is performed with sincere intention for God, exalted be He, issuing from a luminous configuration, then companionship of it is blessedness, all-comprehensiveness and purity. Everything which is performed with a corrupt Satanic intention, issuing from a dark configuration, companionship of it will result in schism, impurity, effacement and evil omen. Do you not see how the Ka'ba is honoured and exalted and a source of blessedness because it was built by the hands of one of God's prophets with sincere intention and with a noble and pure soul, as well as with perfect sincere devotion to God, exalted be He, and that we still witness the vestiges of that in people's deeds and we also find the vestiges of purity and concentration in some places and regions, as well as impurity and schism in others, and this is so only because of that [fact]. That is why He says that a mosque founded upon [pious] fear of God, *from the first day is worthier for you to stand in*, because corporeal configurations exercise an effect on souls, just as ego-centric configurations exercise an effect on bodies. Thus if the place in which one stands has been founded upon [pious] fear of God and purity of soul, the soul will be affected by way of the concentration of single-minded concern (*hamm*) and the purity of the moment and the pleasantness of state and the tasting of ecstatic consciousness. If it is founded, however, upon the desire to make a show and to [cause] harm, it [the soul] will be affected by way of impurity, schism and constriction; *in it are men who love to purify themselves*, that is, a folk who have the will and make the effort to purify

themselves from sins. He is cautioning here that the company of the righteous folk from among the folk of volition has a tremendous effect: it must therefore be chosen, for it affects others. Similarly, a station has an effect of which one must be mindful and to which one must be committed, which is why according to the convention of our [Sufi] folk it is mentioned that one must be mindful of the time, the place and the brethren when actualising the concentration (*jam'iyya*). They made this a precondition for the latter. There is a notification therein that the spiritual cleanliness of the soul of the founder as well as the sincerity of this intention leaves its trace on the thing built, and that the blessedness of the place and the fact that is founded upon goodness entails that there be in it the folk of goodness and righteousness, those whose states correspond to the state of the founder and that God's love is assured for the folk of will and purity given His words: *and God loves those who purify themselves*. How could it be otherwise, when were it not for God's love of them, they would not love to purify themselves.

[9:111] *Indeed God has purchased from the believers their souls and their possessions:* because when He guided them to cognitive faith they were still afflicted with love of possessions and [their] souls, He brought them down, by His excessive solicitude for them, from the station of the love of possessions and the soul by means of a profitable trade and a desirable transaction in that He made the Garden of the soul the price [to be paid] in exchange for their possessions and their souls so that the price to be paid might be of the same genus as that of the thing valued, which is that with which they were familiar, except that it was more pleasurable, more appetising, more desirable and more enduring and hence they came to desire what He had to offer, believing by the power of certainty in His promise. Then after having disengaged from these [possessions and souls] they came to taste the pleasure of avoidance and the sweetness of the light of certainty, they retreated from the station of the pleasure of the soul and repented from its vain desires and lusts and there no longer remained any value in the Garden of the soul for them.

[9:112] Thus He described them as the truly repentant, those who have rejected the pursuit of the pleasures of the soul and the expectation of reward for it, the worshippers who, upon rejecting the love of the soul and possessions and the pursuit of wage and reward, have come to worship God as He ought to be worshipped, neither out of some desire or some awe, but rather in imitation of His angelic realm in their fulfilling of what is due to Him, exalted be He, by submission and heartfelt humility and by yielding humbly before His tremendousness and exaltedness, in reverence of His tremendousness and His majesty. They then praised God as He ought to be praised by manifesting

practical perfections of character and the practical perfections that are hidden in their preparednesses in potentiality a praise through act and through state. They then travelled to Him by emigrating from the station of primordial nature and seeing the fixed perfections as well as their acquainting themselves with, depending on, and being gladdened by these [perfections] in the open expanses of [His] attributes and the waystations of [His] august glories. They then bowed down at the station of the effacement of attributes, then prostrated themselves by the annihilation of the essence. They then fulfilled [the duty of] enjoining decency and forbidding indecency and the maintaining of God's bounds at the station of subsistence after annihilation; *and give good tidings to the believers*, who have true faith, those who reside at the station of uprightness.

[9:113] *It is not for the Prophet, and those who believe, to ask forgiveness*, to the end of this [verse]: in other words, when they discovered the mystery of divine predestination (*qadar*) and stood aware of what God has decreed and determined and came to know what sequels of affairs will be, it was not for them to request the opposite of that. Thus they were satisfied with the matter that God has ordained, even if in their natures there was something that entailed the opposite of that. And this is because they have detached themselves from the entailments of their natures. Thus if natural kinship and formal relationship entails excessive compassion and gentleness towards someone who corresponds to them and is connected to them in that respect but they witness God's judgement against him that he should be subjugated and chastised, their religious zeal drives them to endure patiently if they do not possess the station of satisfaction. Nay indeed, separation on the basis of religion prevails over them against natural kinship and they therefore declare themselves innocent of him and do not request from God what is the opposite of His wisdom and His command. That is why they say: 'The aspiration of the [mystical] knower has no effective power after his knowledge has been perfected'. In other words, when a person is certain that everything happens by His determination and that it is impossible for something to happen in contravention of what God has determined in pre-eternity, he will know that what God wills will be and what He wills not will not be, and neither his aspiration nor anything else can have an effect on anything and hence he does not unleash his aspiration on any matter, unlike the veiled one who ascribes effective agency to something other than God and does not know the mystery of [divine] determination.

[9:115] *And God would never*, send them astray from the path of submission and obedience to His command and of satisfaction with His judgement, *after He had guided them*, to the cognitive affirmation of Oneness and to seeing that everything happens

according to His decree and His determination, *until He had made clear to them*, all that which they ought to be wary of in every one of the stations of their wayfaring and [every one] of the levels of their arrival. So, if they engage in some station of theirs in something which it had been made clear to them that they ought to be wary of, then He will send them astray because they will have been engaging in what is the sin of their state, which is a wickedness in terms of their religion. And refuge is sought with God from error after guidance. *Surely God is Knower of all things*, knowing the intricate details of the sins of their states, even if no one [else] should discern them, and consequently He requites the guided ones from among His friends for these [sins], as mentioned in the lordly *ḥadīth*: ‘Warn the truthful ones that I am a jealous One’.

[9:119] *O you who believe, beware of God*, with regard to all vices by avoiding them, specifically the vice of mendacity, which is the significance of His words: *and be with those who are truthful*. For mendacity is the worst and vilest of vices as it is incompatible with virtuous manliness, for it is said, ‘There can be no manliness in an inveterate liar’. That is because the purpose of speech, by which man is distinguished from all animals, is to inform the other of what he does not know. So when [this] information does not correspond [to the reality], the benefit of speech will not have been actualised and there will result from that a belief that does not correspond [to the truth], which is one of the specific qualities of satanic nature. A liar is thus a satan. And since mendacity is the vilest of vices, so truthfulness is the most virtuous of excellent qualities and the root of every good deed and the substratum of every praiseworthy characteristic and the foundation of all good and felicity, through which is actualised every perfection and every state. Its origin is truthfulness with regard to God’s covenant, exalted be He, which is [itself] the result of sincere fulfilment of the compact of primordial nature or [the compact] itself, as He says: *men who are true to the covenant they made with God* [Q. 33:23] in the binding of resolve and the promise of creatures, as He says with regard to Ishmael: *Indeed he was true to his promise* [Q. 19:54]. If such [truthfulness] is borne in mind in all abodes, including those of incoming thought, consideration, intention, speech, deeds, then dreams, inrushes, states, stations, divine bestowals, and witnessings will all be true, as though it [truthfulness] were the root of the tree of perfection and the seed of the fruit of states.

[9:122] [*It is not for the believers to go forth altogether.*] *Why should not a party of every section of them [go forth]*: in other words, every prepared person from a [particular] group must wayfare along the path of the pursuit of knowledge, since it is not possible for all of them [to do so], either outwardly [impossible] because of the [potential] forfeiting of [the groups’s] welfare, or inwardly [impossible] because there is no

preparedness [for it in each of them]. ‘To gain understanding in religion’ (*tafaqqub*) is a kind of knowledge that belongs to the heart and not one that is earned<sup>84</sup>. For not every person who earns knowledge gains understanding, as He says *And We have placed covers upon their hearts so that they do not understand it (yafqahūn)* [Q. 6:25]: these covers (*akinna*) are natural overlays and ego-centric veils. Thus whoever desires to gain understanding, let him go forth in the way of God and let him wayfare the path of self-cleansing and self-purification until knowledge manifests itself from his heart onto his tongue, as was revealed to one of the prophets of the Children of Israel: ‘O Children of Israel: do not say that knowledge is in the heavens and so who will bring it down, or that it is at the furthest edges of the earth and so who will bring it out, or that it is beyond the sea and so who will traverse [it] and bring it over? Knowledge has been placed in your hearts. Acquire [spiritual] refinement at my hands through the refined dispositions of the spiritual ones and assume the character traits of the truthful ones so that I might make manifest the knowledge that is in your hearts until your are immersed and covered in it. Thus what is meant by ‘gaining understanding’ (*tafaqqub*) is [the gaining of] knowledge that is firmly rooted in the heart, striking its roots [deep] within the soul, its effect being manifest upon the limbs such that the one possessing it is unable to commit anything that stands in opposition to that knowledge. For otherwise, he would not be a learned one (*‘ālim*). Do you know not see how God has deprived of understanding (*fiqh*) that person in whom the awe of God does not prevail over the awe of people, where He says: *You indeed rouse greater awe in their hearts than God. That is because they are a people who do not have understanding* [Q. 59:13], since awe of God is a corollary of knowledge (*‘ilm*), as He says [elsewhere]: *Indeed only those of God’s servants who have knowledge fear Him* [Q. 35:28]. He has also stripped knowledge from one who does not use it, where He says: *Are those who know equal with those who do not know?* [Q. 39:9]. Once they have gained understanding and their knowledge manifests itself upon their limbs, it will have an effect on others who will be affected in turn thereby because they will be quenched and sprinkled by it, as was the state of the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, which is why the warning was necessary, that being the purpose [ultimately], as He says: ***and that they may warn their folk when they return to them, so that they may beware?*** The one who dedicates himself to gaining [such] understanding, then [for him] comes the greater struggle, followed by the lesser struggle, which is why He then says:

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<sup>84</sup> According to Ibn ‘Arabī’s hermeneutics, there are two kinds of knowledge, one that is bestowed (*mawhūb*) and which is the result of God-fearing (*taqwā*) [cf. Q. 2:282 and 8:29], and another that is earned (*muktasab*)

[9:123] *O you who believe, fight those [of the disbelievers] who are near to you*, from among the disbelieving faculties of your souls, which are the most hostile of your enemies, *and let them find harshness in you*, that is, a vanquishing and a severity until you attain the degree of God-fearing so that there then descends upon you assistance from God as He says: *and know that God is with the God-fearing*.

[9:126] *Do they not see that they are tried*, [to the end of] the verse: trial is a steersman from God, exalted be He, that steers people to Him. It is mentioned in the *ḥadīth*: ‘Trial is one of God’s scourges, exalted be He, by which He drives His servants towards Him’. Every illness, impoverishment, or evil state that befalls a person breaks the vehemence of his soul and its faculties, curbs its attributes and its vain desires so that the heart becomes tender and emerges from its veiling and is roused from its reliance on this world and its pleasures, becoming constricted and recoiling in disgust from it, orienting itself instead towards God. The least of the degrees of this [trial] is that if he should discover that there is no escape from Him except to Him and should find no flight from or way out of the trial besides [through] Him, he submits humbly and yields before Him, as He says: *And if waves cover them like awnings, they call on God, sincere before Him in their faith* [Q. 31:32]; and [also where He says]: *If misfortune should befall a man, he calls upon Us on his side, or sitting or standing* [Q. 10:12]. In sum, it [trial] necessarily brings about a thinning of the veil or its [complete] removal, so let him make the most of his moment, seek refuge [with God] and adopt a [virtuous] character trait that will always define him so that awareness and remembrance might be established and presence and repentance might be facilitated [for that person] so that he no longer habituates himself to forgetfulness upon deliverance [from trial] and that the soul is not fortified when security reigns, lest it prevail and [lest] the veil is drawn down [even a] denser [veil] than the one before, as He has said: *but when He delivers them to land, behold! they ascribe partners to Him* [Q. 29:65], [and] *but when We have relieved him of his misfortune, he passes on as if he had never called upon Us because of a misfortune that befell him* [Q. 10:12].

[9:128] [*Verily there has come to you*] *a messenger from among yourselves*, so that there might be genus-correspondence in terms of the soul between you and him, [a correspondence] by means of which affinity comes to exist between you and him and you mix with him by virtue of that genus-correspondence and become mixed with him, such that your souls are affected by the luminosity of that [genus of his] that is derived from the light of his heart and they are thus illumined by it and the darkness of innate disposition and habit is removed from them; *for whom it is grievous*, it is harsh and burdensome for him that you should suffer, be wretched or encounter [God] as

loathsome ones, [and this] because of his compassion, which itself is a concomitant of the divine love that he possesses for His servants, and because he sees them as being like his own organs and limbs, since he considers [them] through the eyes of the unity. And so just as it would grieve any of us that an organ should be painful, so for him [the Prophet] it is grievous that any one from among his community should be chastised; *who is full of concern for you*, because of his intense concern for your preservation; in the same way that one of us would be intensely concerned for every single part of his body and limbs, and would not accept that the slightest part of him should be missing or that it should suffer, so is the case with him [the Prophet]. Nay, his concern is greater by virtue of the precision of his consideration; *to the believers full of pity*, saving them from punishment by warning them against sins and acts of disobedience by virtue of his pity; *merciful*, effusing upon them forms of knowledge, gnoses, and perfections that bring propinquity [to the divine] by instructing [them in it] and making [them] desire them by virtue of his mercifulness.

[9:129] *So if they turn away*, and refuse to receive [your] pity and mercy, because of their unpreparedness or because of the disappearance of this [preparedness], and have exposed themselves to eternal wretchedness, *say: 'God suffices me*: I have no need of you, nor of your assistance, in the same way that a man has no need of a painful and gangrenous appendage, which, on the basis of reason, must be amputated. In other words, God avails me [of all else]. There is nothing in existence except Him and hence there is no effective agent other than Him and no helper except Him. *In Him I trust*: I cannot see that any [other than Him] possesses [the power to] act and there is no might or strength except in Him, *and He is the Lord of the Tremendous Throne*', that encompasses all things, from which issue His judgement and command for all.

## [10] Yūnus

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[10:1] *Alif lām rā'*: [the *rā'* is] an allusion to the mercy that is the Muḥammadan essence, since He says *We did not send you except as a mercy to all the worlds* [Q. 21:107]. As for *alif lām*, they have already been mentioned. *Those*, that is, what is being alluded to by these letters is the pillars of the universal Book that contains wisdom, or the one whose differentiations have been set clear and precise. Or [it means]: I swear by God — in consideration of the ipseity of exclusive unity (*aḥadiyya*) in concentration and the attribute of inclusive unity (*wāḥidiyya*) in differentiation within the inner aspect of the realm of divine power (*jabarūt*) and the outer aspect of the realm of divine mercy (*raḥamūt*) — to what is being mentioned, or to that those signs mentioned in the *sūra*, *are the signs of the Book*, containing wisdom.

[10:2] *Is it for the people a wonder*, to the end of this [verse]: He censures their wonder, since God's way has always followed this method of inspiring men. Their wonder is because of their remoteness from his [the Prophet's] station and the non-correspondence of their state to his state and the incompatibility of what they believe with what he has brought them. [*Warn the people and give good tidings to those who believe*] *that they have a prior [promise of] truth with their Lord*?, that is to say, a tremendous precedent [of merit], in accordance with first [divine] solicitude, or [that they have] a station of propinquity to Him the like of which no one else enjoys and which God has specified for them from pre-eternity through pure selection, for otherwise they would not have been believers in it [the Qur'ān]. *The disbelievers*, who have been veiled from God and have not become aware of the manifestation of His attributes in the Muḥammadan soul, *say, 'Truly this, which he has brought, is manifest sorcery'*, that is, something beyond the power of mortals, and can only be the work of devils. They say that because devilry [itself] holds sway over them and they are veiled by it from God, and because of their worship of Satan, such that they have not arrived at any stage of spiritual beings beyond him [Satan] in terms of power, which is why they ascribed what was beyond the limit of mortals to him by nature.

[10:3] *He directs*, the affairs of the heavens and the earths in accordance with His wisdom by the Hand of His power. *There is no intercessor*, to intercede for anyone by effusing perfection and extending a light with which to bring that person close to God and deliver him from the darknesses of the soul and purify him from the abomination of its attributes, *save after*, He grants [His] permission by bestowing preparedness, then



by facilitating the causes [for that intercession]; *that*, one who is described by these attributes, *is God, your Lord*, who nurtures you and directs your affair, so single out worship for Him and know Him by these attributes. Do not worship Satan and do not veil yourself from Him through one of His attributes such that you then ascribe His words and His acts to Satan.

[10:4] *To Him is the return of all of you*, in the return to the source of non-delimited union at the minor resurrection, as is the case now, or to the source of the Essential union through annihilation in Him at the major resurrection: *God's promise, in truth. Truly He originates creation*, at the first creation (*nash'a*), *then recreates it*, at the second creation, *that He may requite*, the believer and the disbeliever according to their faith and their righteous deeds or [according to] their disbelief and corrupt deeds [respectively]: this is [the reading] according to the first interpretation. According to the second [possible interpretation]: He originates creation by hiding Himself and manifesting them, then recreates them by annihilating them and manifesting Himself, so that He might requite those who believe in Him and perform righteous deeds in the way that rectifies them for the encounter with Him in terms of deeds that remove their veils and draw them closer [to Him], *with justice*, in accordance with the stations which they have attained through their deeds by means of His bestowals of states and tastings, [bestowals] which are entailed by their station and their yearning. Or [it means] that He might requite those who believe with real faith and performed through God deeds which make servants righteous, that is to say, [so that He might requite them] with a requital of perfecting [them] for their justness, that is, because of their equitableness during the time of uprightness, or a requital commensurate with their level and station in terms of uprightness. *And those who*, are veiled in any given station, *for them will be a draught of boiling water*, for their ignorance of what is above that [station] and [for] their doubt and anxiety, since if they had arrived at certainty they would have tasted its coolness, *and a painful chastisement*, by way of privation and abandonment and the loss of the spirit of ecstatic consciousness because of their being veiled.

[10:5] *He it is Who made*, the sun of the spirit the radiance of existence and the moon of the heart His light and determined [the extent of] its journeying in the wayfaring to Him, *as mansions*, and stations, *so that you might know the number*, of the ages of your levels and stages in journeying to God and in God, and the reckoning of your degrees and where you come to stand at each station and level.

[10:6] *Truly in the alternation*, of the night of the victory of the darkness of the soul over the heart and the day of the irradiation of the light of the spirit upon this [heart] and [in] what God has created in the heavens of spirits and the earth of bodies, *there are*

*signs for a people who fear*, the veils of the attributes of the commanding-soul and who have attained the level of the self-reproaching soul and have recognised these signs.

[10:10] *their supplication therein*, that is, the supplication of their preparedness in the three Gardens to which God guides them in accordance with the light of their faith [is]: *'Glory be to You*, that is, it is their exalting of Him in the first [Garden] as transcendent above having associates in [His] acts by declaring themselves quit of any might or strength, and in the second [Garden] as being above having associates in His attributes by stripping themselves away from their attributes, and in the third [Garden] as being above having associates in existence by means of their annihilation; *and their greeting therein*, that is, the greeting of the one of them to the other at every level therein will be the effusion of the light of self-cleansing and the extending of self-purification by one to the other; or, that God's greeting to them therein will be the irradiation of [His] self-disclosures and the extending of disengagement [to them] and the removal of defects by the Truth, exalted be He, from them. *And their final supplication will be*, that is to say, the last of what their preparednesses entail and their plea to God, exalted be He, by requesting effusion will be their subsisting through God in the manifestation of His perfections and the attributes of His majesty and beauty upon them, which is the true praise from Him and for Him. The specification of that praise for Him in undifferentiated mode then in differentiated mode is first in consideration of His absolute ipseity, then in consideration of His lordship over the worlds.

[10:11] *And if God should hasten for mankind evil*, to the end of this [verse]: since preparednesses were created as naturally disposed (*maftūra*) to relative good, whether formal or supra-sensory, in the measure commensurate with their degrees from pre-eternity, then every supplication such [a preparedness] makes and [every] request for good, by the configuration of its receptivity and its purification and yearning for that [good], necessarily brings about the actualisation of that [good] for it promptly and its being effused upon him from the Effusing Principle who is the source of good things and blessings, as He says: *And He grants you of all that you ask of Him* [Q. 14:34]. Every time that good is effused upon him by virtue of his meriting it because of the existence of purification and cleansing, his preparedness increases by the joining of that good to him, becoming thus stronger and more receptive than the former, and so the Principle, exalted be He, is quicker to respond to him and more effusing upon him. Accordingly with the increase in preparedness comes the increase in effusion until it reaches its [full] extent, which is the significance of 'the doubling of good deeds' and the significance of His words: *whoever brings a good deed shall have better than it* [Q. 28:84]. As for evil things, these are nothing but the veils of preparedness and the impediments to

receptivity and the barriers to effusion. When these [evils] are actualised, what takes place because of them is simply the non-receptivity for good things, whereby they are prevented from the effusion of these [good things] and the preparedness remains as the veil constituting what has been actualised by that [evil] and nothing else. If, in accordance with correspondence, that [preparedness] entails the effusion of evil, then there is nothing in the effusion of the Principle that corresponds to that [evil effusion] and so nothing is effused upon the latter from Its genus, and this is the significance of His words: *and whoever brings an evil deed shall only be requited the like of it* [Q. 6:160], unless, perhaps, if he has gone to excess and transgressed the bounds of mercy, eliminating [his] preparedness totally, thereby corresponding to devilry and drawing upon its world, as He says: *Shall I inform you upon whom the devils descend? They descend upon every sinful liar* [Q. 26:221-222]; *it would already have been concluded for them*, the extent of their preparedness would have been terminated and thus the reinforcement of true life would have been cut off from them and the reinforcement of good [would have been cut off] from their preparedness totally and the possibility for its being purified would have been eliminated entailing as it would have evil, Thereafter there would not reach them any good, neither formal nor supra-sensory. But He gives them respite as long as there remains in them the smallest glimpse of their preparedness and the possibility of receptivity for the slightest good. *But We leave those who do not expect to encounter Us*, from among those, that is, those who are not in the least bit concerned because of their being engrossed in evil acts and do not expect any light from Us and never awaken from their heedlessness by returning to Us and seeking Our mercy, *in their insolence*, and their extensive indulgence in evils to wander perplexed, so that the reinforcement of formal good things sought by their preparedness by the tongue of its state is cut off from them, such that, by this engrossment and immersion in the things of physical nature, the light of their preparedness disappears totally by virtue of the actualisation of rust [on their hearts], whereafter [their] obliteration becomes deserved and they are turned on their heads to the lowest of the low.

[10:19] *Mankind was but one community*, upon the primordial nature which God created in mankind, oriented towards the unity, illumined by the light of original guidance, *then they differed*, by the exigencies of creation and the different constitutions and desires, habits and [social] interactions. *And had it not been for a word that had already preceded from your Lord*, that is, [were it not for] a decree that had preceded from pre-eternity to designate terms [of life] and provisions and that every fortunate one and every wretched one should fulfil the limits of what has been determined for him in terms of the things he does, *it would have been decided between them regarding*

*that over which they differed*, imminently and the fortunate one would have been distinguished from the wretched one, as well as truth from falsehood in terms of their religions and communities. However, God's wisdom has entailed that every one of them should attain the direction to which he has turned his countenance through the deeds which he performs and to manifest what is hidden in his soul.

[10:21] *And when We made people taste of mercy after adversity that had afflicted them:* it has already been mentioned how different types of trials in the way of adversities and hardships and all kinds of severe distress [serve to] break the soul's enthusiasm for evil (*shirra*) and make the heart more tender by removing the veils of the soul's attributes, thinning the densities of nature and lifting of the coverings of vain desire. That is why their hearts incline by nature to their point of origin when in that state [of tasting mercy], since they are then returning to the entailments of their primordial nature, their original luminosity and their primordial faculty, and they are inclining to ascending, something which is rooted in them, once the impediment has been eliminated. Nay to incline to the upper aspect and to the luminous points of origin is a predisposition created in the nature of all spiritual faculties, even the animal soul, if it should cleanse itself of dark corporeal configurations. For to tend to what is low belongs to corporeal accidents. So much so that even beasts and wild animals when in hardship during times of scarcity and days of drought, [you see them] gather in groups with their heads raised towards the heaven as though their spiritual connection senses the coming down of an effusion from the upper aspect so that they might then draw on it [for relief]. Similarly, when outward graces are plentiful for people, the resources of nature in full supply for them and [their] corporeal needs [satisfied], the soul is strengthened [and emboldened] by the reinforcement of the lower aspect and its faculties become arrogant and overbearing towards the heart, the veil becomes denser and harsher, vain desire acquires mastery and becomes victory such that corporeal nature holds sway and dark corporeal configurations pile up. And thus the heart becomes shaped by the configuration of the soul, hardening, becoming harsher and insolent, made recklessly arrogant by [the plentifulness of] grace to the extent that it becomes ungrateful, blind and inclines to the lower aspect remote as it is to luminous configuration in such instances. In the measure that the soul acquires mastery over the heart, so too does the estimative faculty acquire mastery over the intellect, whereupon devilry becomes master, given that the rational faculty is now captive in the shackles of estimation and under its command, exploited by it for its own pursuits and rendering its goals palatable to it as it actualises the pleasures of the soul, reinforcing it [the rational faculty] from the world of abomination and strengthening its attributes with equipment from the world of

natural character and tools of the substrata of [worldly] shares through reflection, such that the heart becomes veiled through [the accumulation of] rust to the receptivity of the attributes of the Truth totally. That is the significance of His words: *behold! they have some plot concerning Our signs. Say: 'God is swifter at plotting*, by concealing the true vanquishing power within this formal graciousness, while [simultaneously] preparing the chastisement of the fires of privation, the snakes and the black scorpions of the configurations of vices, as well as the garment of boiling pitch within this outward mercy. *Surely Our messengers are writing down that which you are plotting'*: you have already come to know that heavenly spiritual realm is engraved with every event that occurs in this world. Thus every good or vile deed that issues from someone has already been inscribed for him in those Tablets. The spiritual realm for every body has been connected to those spiritual (*malakūtiyya*) points of origin. Consequently, whenever we aspire to do a good thing or a wicked thing, its form is etched out in the spiritual realm of our bodies as an incoming thought initially whereafter we reflect upon it. Once the engraving is firmly established and resolve issues forth from it so that we live up to the initial thought [itself] with unequivocal will, it becomes imprinted as we embark on that act; except that if it is a good deed it is instantly imprinted in the direction of the heart, which is adjacent to the spirit and the tablet of the inner heart illuminated by its light. The practical rational faculty, which is the angel of the right-hand side, from the two [guardian] angels charged [with every human being] — the ones alluded to in His saying: *on the right and on the left [there is one] seated* [Q. 50:17] — then records this [act]. For the inner heart is the stronger of the two sides. If it is an evil deed, it does not become imprinted immediately because of the remoteness of the dark configuration from the heart and its non-correspondence to it in essence. If that the divine granting of success overtakes that person and one of the lights of spiritual guidance shines over him and he is remorseful and seeks forgiveness, that [evil thought] will be erased and he will be pardoned; but if it does not reach him, that [thought] will keep repeating itself until the soul reinforces it by the darkness of its attributes whereupon it will be come to reside in the tablet of the breast which is that aspect of the heart that is adjacent to the soul and which is dark because of the darkness of the soul that overwhelmed it when that act issued forth from it. The imaginative faculty, which is the angel of the left, since this is the weaker of the two sides, will record that [deed]. This is what they mean when they say that the angel on the left does not record an evil deed until six hours have passed: if during this that person seeks forgiveness it is not recorded, but if he persists it is recorded. From this statement one is able to understand the [meaning of the] bringing of the book to the Muslim by his right hand

and to the unbeliever by his left. As for the [actual] form of this bringing and its modality, this will be mentioned in the relevant place, God willing.

[10:23] [*O mankind*] *your insolence is only against your own souls*, to the end of this [verse]: insolence is the opposite of justness. So just as justness is a virtue that subsumes all other virtues and configuration from the [inclusive] unity that procures an effusion from the light of the Oneness for the soul, so insolence can only be the result of utter engrossment in vices such that it requires all of them. The one so [insolent] is at extreme distance from the Truth and utter darkness, as it is said [in a *ḥadīth*]: ‘Injustice shall be [a heap of] darkneses on the Day of Resurrection’. That is why He says ‘against your souls’ and not against the victim of the injustice, because the one suffering the injustice will end up fortunate thereby while the unjust one will be utterly wretched. It is but the enjoyment of the life of this world since all excesses and acts of immoderation that are the counterpart to justice are mere natural enjoyments and animal pleasures that will perish with the perishing of sensory life whose similitude in being quick to disappear and of little endurance is given in the similitude here in which the earth adorns itself with its ornaments by [receiving] rainwater but is then quickly destroyed by some ruinous matter before there is time to profit from the plants [that had shot forth with the rain]. There then follows eternal wretchedness and everlasting painful chastisement. According to the *ḥadīth* it is said that the good that is quickest to receive reward is kindness to relatives; and the evil that receives its punishment most promptly is insolence and the perjurious oath, since against this latter there accumulate the dues of people and so his punishment cannot be delayed for the length of time that a due of God, exalted be He, can. I have heard one [Sufi] shaykh say: ‘Rarely does an insolent [tyrant] die a natural death and rarely does a wicked person reach old age’, and that is because they both challenge God, exalted be He, by trying to demolish the order which God’s solicitude is devoted to keeping in check and because they both contravene His wisdom and His justice.

[10:25] *And God summons to the Abode of Peace*: He summons all to the abode of the peace of the spiritual world in which there is no calamity, no deficiency, no misery and no perishing, but instead there is safety from every defect and security from every fear, *and He guides whomever He wills*, of the prepared folk from among them, *to*, the path of [His] Oneness.

[10:26] *For those who do good*, that is, for those who do that by which their [spiritual] state becomes fairer in the way of good, whether in deed or speech or knowledge, and which is the cause of their perfection, [there shall be for them], *the fairest reward*, in terms of the perfection that will be effused upon them as a result of that good, *and an*

*increase*, in the way of level than the preceding one, either by rising [to the next station] or an increase in preparedness for the receptivity of goodness and perfections by adding this perfection and this light that is being effused upon them to their former preparedness as mentioned; neither dust from the impurities of the soul's attributes and the rising of its overwhelmings, *shall overcome*, the faces of their hearts, *nor ignominy*, from the inclination of their hearts to the lower aspect. *Those, they are the inhabitants of the Garden*, which their state and their elevation entail of the mentioned Gardens, *wherein they will abide*.

[10:27] *And for those who earn*, all kinds of, *evil deeds*, in the way of deeds, words and beliefs that veil their preparedness from the reception of perfection, *[there shall be] the requital of an evil deed by the like thereof*, in terms of the configuration that has been perpetrated by their hearts by way of their evil deeds, preventing them from purity and light, *and ignominy*, inclination to the lower aspect, *shall overcome them — they have no protector against God*, to protect them from that ignominy and forsaking on account of the presence of the veil and the non-receptivity for protection by virtue of the impurities becoming fixed [therein] — *as if their faces had been covered with strips of darkest night*, because of the excessive extent to which they have acquired that dark configuration through their natural inclinations and despicable deeds. *Those, they are the inhabitants of the Fire*, which their state entails in tending to the lower [aspect] in the way of the fires of [their] vestiges and [evil] acts.

[10:28] *And the day on which We shall gather them all together*, at the greatest gathering, the source of the non-delimited union of existence; *then We shall say to those who associated others [with God]*, from among them, that is, the veiled ones who have halted with the other in love and obedience: *'In your place!*, that is, hold your place. *You and your associates!'*: the meaning [of this] is that they are made to halt with that with which they had halted [in their idolatry] at the halting place in addition to the severing of the union (*waṣl*) and the means (*asbāb*) which are the very causes of their love and their worship, with the worshipped being dissociating from the worshipper because of the absence of corporeal instruments and natural individual desires which necessitated that union. That is the meaning of His words: *Then We shall make a separation between them*, in other words, even though they are together at the halting place, We shall make a separation between them in terms of direction, in that the level of the worshipped ends up being higher while the level of the worshipper ends up lower in addition to the discrepancy between their two states, if the worshipped being was a noble being, such as the angels, Jesus or Ezra and their like from among those who have a preceding reward from God, as He says: *Indeed those to whom [the promise of] the fairest*

reward went beforehand from Us, those, they will be kept away from it [Q. 21:101]; **and their associates will say: 'It was not us that you were worshipping,** rather you were worshipping Satan by your obedience of him and what you fancifully invented by your estimations in the way of corrupt falsehoods and fallacious wishes.

[10:29] *God suffices as a witness*, to the end of this [verse]: in other words, God knows that we did not command to you this and we did not desire that you worship us.

[10:30] *There*, that is, at that halting place, *every soul*, shall be tested and made to taste, *what it did before*, in this world, *and they shall be returned to God*, at the halting place for recompense having been cut off from their deities and being isolated from them [and along with], *their rightful Lord*, who takes charge of requiting them justly and equitably, *and that which they were forging*, in the way of their fanciful inventions, the principles of their religion, their creed, their fictitious estimations and false wishes, *shall fail them*.

[10:37] *And this Qur'ān is not*, a fabrication [concocted], *besides God; but it is a confirmation of what is before it*, of the Preserved Tablet, *and a detailing of the Book*, which is the Mother, as where He says: *And it is indeed in the Mother Book, with Us, [and it is] indeed exalted, full of wisdom* [Q. 43:4]. In other words, how can it be discordant [with previous revelation] when it has already been confirmed previously in two Books, in terms of detailed knowledge as in the Preserved Tablet and in terms of undifferentiated knowledge as in the Mother Book the detailing of which is this [Qur'ān].

[10:39] *Nay, but they denied that, the knowledge whereof they did not comprehend*: in other words, since they did not know the modality of its confirmation according to God's knowledge and its revelation to our master Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him, and [since] their knowledge fell short of that, they denied it; *and whereof the interpretation has not yet come to them*, that is, [before there has come to them] the manifestation of what it [the Qur'ān] alludes to of promised eventualities and similes, the affair and knowledge of which constitutes its unfolding (*ta'wīl*) whereat they would not be able to deny [it], because once its realities are manifested no one will be able to deny it. The like of that tremendous denial, *did those who were before them deny. Behold then what was*, their sequel when they did evil by [their] denial.

[10:40] *And of them are some who believe in it*, that is, who will believe in it because of the thinness of their veil, *and some who would never believe therein*, ever, because of the thickness of their veil.



[10:42] *And of them are some who listen to you*, but do not understand, either because they lack preparedness originally, or because dark configurations that veil the light of preparedness are firmly rooted in them, or because of both of these coming together, as in the case of one who is deaf and without reason, such that he cannot hear and cannot comprehend any gesture: how can such a one be made to understand?

[10:43] *And of them are some who look toward you*, but do not perceive the truth nor your reality, because of one of the two mentioned reasons or both, as in the case of the blind person to whose loss of sight is added the loss of insight so that he neither sees nor perceives: how can such be guided?

[10:44] *Verily God is not unjust towards mankind in any way*: since there is mention of deafness and blindness, both of which indicate a lack of preparedness for perception, one is given to think from these statements that an injustice has taken place by virtue of the fact that some possess preparedness while others do not. However, He disavows any [suggestion of] injustice with regard to Himself because the lack of original preparedness is not [an act of] injustice [on His part], on account of the non-existence of the possibility of better [preparedness] than that with regard to that person's specificity and ipseity: thus his entified reality entails that [preparedness] at some level of contingency. It is like in the case of an ass which, given its asinine nature, cannot possess preparedness entailing human perception and its entified reality requires the asinine preparedness entailed therein: nothing is demanded of it that would be beyond [the capacity of] its preparedness. Hence there is no injustice in this case, since there had not been any at the outset. If, however, it [the preparedness] is invalidated by dark configurations taking firm root, then [the matter is clear and] there is nothing more to be said about this. In both cases, that person is unjust to his soul. As for the former, [he is unjust] because he has fallen short in terms of the degrees of contingency and his deficiency relative to what is above him, as, for example, with the ass falling short of [the level of] man and its being deficient in relation to him but not in relation to itself: in terms of itself it [the ass] has neither fallen short nor is deficient. As for the latter, it is obvious.<sup>85</sup> According to this sense then: *they [mankind] are unjust to their own souls*. They diminish their shares. Or, it is that God does not wrong mankind in any way by demanding of them what is beyond their [individual] preparedness and then punishing them for [failing] that. It is that mankind wrong their own souls by using their preparednesses for things other than for which these were created.

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<sup>85</sup> This is the case of the person who is unjust to his own soul by ruining his preparedness as a result of accumulating dark configurations.

[10:45] *And on the day when He shall gather them as if they had not tarried but an hour of the day*, since they do not sense motion, a concomitant of their obliviousness (*dhubūl*) to [the passage of] time. For the one who is oblivious to motion will [also] be oblivious to time. Thus a single hour or interminable ages are all the same to them; *they recognise one another*, by virtue of their former companionship and the exigency of vain desire that is a corollary of the original correspondence [between them] [and recognising each other] by the sign of the ominous fate [that awaits them]. Then if the original genus-correspondence and correspondence of primordial nature remain by virtue of their having the one orientation and coincidence in terms of goals the mutual recognition between them remains. If it does not remain because of the variance of desires and difference of opinions as well as the discrepancy in terms of the configurations deriving from the appendages of creation and the accidents of substrata, this [mutual recognition] turns into mutual denial; *those will verily have lost who denied the encounter with God*, because of their having fallen under the loneliness (*wahṣha*) of mutual denial in that case and their veiling themselves with the veils of their wicked habits and the configurations of their corrupt beliefs, *and they were not guided*: and the light of their preparedness is invalidated so that they are not guided to God nor to mutual recognition and are thus made to slink in a loathsome state, banished, having no intimate with whom to be familiar nor any acquaintance to give refuge to.

[10:47] *And for every community there is a messenger*, who corresponds to them in terms of ego-centric states so that he might make possible between them that familiarity which leads to their being able to learn from him and so that he might be able to descend to the limits of their intellects and the levels of their comprehensions and thus cleanse them by means of what will rectify their states and remove their veils and teach them that which will result in their elevation from their stations and guide to God. *And when their messenger comes, judgement is passed between them*, with the guiding of those who have accepted guidance and the sending astray of those who have chosen to stray and the felicity of the fortunate ones and the wretchedness of those who are damned by the manifestation of all of that in his presence, some obeying him because of their closeness to him, others denying him because of their remoteness from him, *justly*, that is, with equity, that which prevails in the state of a prophet, being as it is the outward aspect of his affirmation of [God's] Oneness, his conduct and his chosen path, *and they are not wronged*, by having other than what is their state ascribed to them and then being requited for it. Or, it is that judgement is passed between them by delivering and confirming those who have found guidance through him [the messenger] and

destroying those who have gone astray and chastising them on account of the manifesting of the causes for such [chastisement] through his presence [among them].

[10:48] *And they say: 'When will this promise come to pass, if you are truthful?'*: a disavowal [on their part] because of their being veiled from the resurrection and their failure to become aware of its meaning, since had they known its modality by the lifting of their veils through disengagement from the garments of the soul, they would have believed them concerning that [promise] and would not have disavowed [it].

[10:49] *Say: 'I have no power to hurt myself,* to the end of this [verse]: he approximated for them the presential vision of the [divine] acts by denying that he has power or effective agency and that if such does come about from him it must necessarily be through God's will, so that they might recognise the vestiges of the resurrection. He then intimates [to them] that the minor resurrection will take place at the termination of their appointed times, which are determined by God as in where He says: *For every community there is an appointed time,* to the end of this [verse].

[10:57] *O people! There has come to you an admonition,* that is, a [means of] cleansing for your souls by way of [the mention of] promise and threat, warning and glad tidings, restraining from sins that lead to punishment and incitement to deeds that result in reward, so that you might conduct yourselves on the basis of fear and hope, *and a healing for what is in the breasts,* that is, [for what is in] the hearts of sicknesses, such as doubt, hypocrisy, rancour, deception and the like thereof, [a healing that cures by] instructing [people] in the realities and the wisdoms that necessarily result in certainty and [by] purifying these [hearts] for the reception of gnosis and illumination by the light of the Oneness and being prepared for the self-disclosures of the attributes, *and a guidance,* for your spirits towards the presential vision of the Essence, *and a mercy,* by way of the effusion of the perfections that befit every one of the three stations after the actualisation of preparedness at the station of the soul through admonition, and at the station of the heart through purification and at the station of the spirit through guidance, *for those who believe,* by way of affirmation first, certainty second and eyewitness thirdly.

[10:58] *Say: 'In the bounty of God,* that is, in His facilitating the reception at the three stations, *and in His mercy,* in the bestowals relating to character traits, knowledge and unveilings at the three levels let them concern themselves; and if they are to rejoice, *in that let them rejoice,* and not in transient matters that amount to little and are of lowly worth and weight: *it is better than what they board,* in the way of vile corrupt things and evanescent degrading things from among the sum total of the ephemera [of this

world], if they are truly folk of knowledge and perspicacity and possessors of esteem and aspirations.

[10:59] *Say: 'Have you considered what God has sent down, to the end of this [verse]: that is to say, inform me: that which God has sent down in the way of spiritual provision, such as the realities, forms of gnosis, states, and bestowals and [provision] such as refined manners, divine laws, admonitions and counsels, how you have made some of it unlawful, as in the case of the first group, and some lawful?', as in the case of the second group. Say: 'Has God given you permission, to judge what is unlawful and what is lawful, or do you invent lies concerning God?'*

[10:60] *And what do they suppose, those who invent lies concerning God, [will happen to them] on the Day of, the middle, Resurrection?, at the disengagement of the heart from the garments of the soul and the actualisation of certainty; or, on the day of the major resurrection at the affirmation of the Essential unity and the manifestation of eyewitnessing. In other words, their supposition shall not endure and will amount to nothing then. Or, [it is] on the day of the minor resurrection at [the point of] death and the actualisation of privation: in other words, their supposition shall have an evil consequence for them and will be a chastisement then. Truly God is Bountiful to people, with both kinds of worlds, effusing both [onto them] and facilitating [for them] the reception of both and setting up the preparedness to accept the two; but most of them do not give thanks, for His graces and so they use what He has bestowed on them of preparedness and knowledge in order to actualise particular benefits and sensory goals, becoming ungrateful for His graces and hence prevented from increase.*

[10:62] *Assuredly God's friends, those immersed in the source of the ipseity of [exclusive] unity through the annihilation of the ego, no fear shall befall them, since no remnant of them remains by which they might fear privation, nor [do they have] any ultimate goal beyond what they have attained so that they might then fear the veils of this [pursuit], neither shall they grieve, because of the impossibility of anything in the way of perfections and pleasures eluding them that they might then grieve for it. It is related from Sa'īd b. Jubayr that the Messenger of God, may God's blessings and peace be upon him, was once asked, 'Who are these [friends]?', to which he replied, 'They are the ones the sight of whom provokes remembrance of God', which is a subtle allusion from him, peace be upon him. It is also related from 'Umar [bin al-Khattāb], may God be satisfied with him: 'I heard the Messenger of God say, "Verily there are servants of God who are neither prophets nor martyrs but are envied by the prophets and the martyrs on the Day of Resurrection for their place with God". They asked [the Prophet], "O Messenger of God, pray tell who are they and what [sort of] deeds did*

they perform, that perhaps we might love them?” He said, “They are a folk whose love for one another is through God and not on the basis of any kinship or any business they conduct with one another. By God their faces are light and verily they stand upon minbars of light, fearing not when people have fear, neither grieving when people grieve”, whereupon he recited this [above] verse’. As for his saying that they are ‘upon minbars of light’, he means by this that they are connected to the higher spiritual principles, such as the First Intellect and what comes after that.

[10:63] *Those who believe and fear [God]*: if [this clause is] understood as an adjectival qualification of ‘God’s friends’, then the meaning is: those who believe with the faith of the Truth and who guard against any remnants from themselves or the manifestation of any variegations in them;

[10:64] *theirs are good tidings in the life of this world*, by the coming into existence of uprightness [in their case] with regard to deeds and character traits that are good tidings [for them] of the Garden of the souls, *and in the Hereafter*, by the manifestation upon them of the lights of the attributes, the spiritual realities and the gnosés deriving from the Truth, all of which are glad tidings of the Garden of the hearts and the actualisation [for them] of [spiritual] tasting and pleasures through these two [Gardens]. *There is no changing the Words of God*, His realities that come upon them, His Names that are unveiled to them and the judgements of His self-disclosures that descend upon them. If the beginning of each [of the clauses] is taken as a [new syntactical] subject, then the meaning is: for those who believe with the faith of certainty and guard against the veils of the soul’s attributes and the impediments to unveilings in the way of illusory doubts and satanic evil whisperings there are good tidings in the life of this world by means of the ecstatic consciousness of the pleasure of the coolness of certainty in the soul and its reassurance by the descent [upon it] of the divine peace, and [good tidings] in the Hereafter by means of the ecstatic consciousness of the tasting of the self-disclosures of the attributes and the effects of the lights of unveilings. [And it means that] there is no changing the Words of God in terms of their God-given knowledge and judgements of certainty or the primordial nature which God has created in them, every soul being a Word [of God].

[10:65] *And let not what they say grieve you*: in other words, do not be affected by it, for it is [mere] contentiousness [on their part]. Rather, witness the might of God and His vanquishing power so that you might look upon them in light of the annihilation and see their deeds and statements and their threats to you as [scattered] dust. For he who witnesses God’s power and might, will see that all power and might belongs [only] to Him and that there is no power or strength in anyone else. *He is the Hearer*, of what

they say about you and will requite them [for it], *the Knower*, of what ought to be done with them. He then demonstrates their weakness, incapacity and the impossibility of their overcoming him with His words:

[10:66] *Why, surely to God belongs all who are in the heavens and all who are in the earth*, all being under His dominion, disposal and subjugation and have no power over anything other than through His Essence and His will and His empowering of them. *Those who call upon besides God are not following associates*: what thing can those who call upon besides God follow as associate? In other words, if all are under His subjugation and dominion, then what they call upon besides God cannot be anything, nor can it have any effective agency or power; *they are following nothing but*, the illusions of their conjecture and what they conjure up in their imagination, and they are but reckoning the existence of something which has no existence in reality.

[10:67] *He it is Who made for you the night*, of the body, *that you should rest therein, and the day*, of the spirit that you should perceive thereby the realities of things and that by which you might be guided to Him. *Surely in that are signs for a folk who are able to bear*, the speech of God and thus understand its esoteric meanings and bounds and discover thereby His attributes and His names and thus witness Him as He is described and qualified by these.

[10:68] *They say, 'God has taken [to Him] a son'*, that is, a defective [thing] to correspond to Him in genus. *Glory be to Him!*: declare Him as transcendent above corresponding in genus to anything. *He is Independent*, One who exists by His own Essence and by Whom everything comes to exist. How then can anything be like Him? And the One to whom all existence belongs: how can anything correspond to Him?

[10:71] *And recite to them the story of Noah*, with regard to the soundness of his trust in God and how he looked upon his people and their associates through the eye of annihilation and [how] he was not concerned with them or with their scheming, so that they might consider thereby your state [with regard to them], for all prophets are one in terms of the creed of the affirmation of Oneness and their subsisting in God and not being concerned with [the machinations of] creatures.

[10:84] *And Moses said, 'O my people, if you have believed in God*, a faith of certainty, *then put your trust in Him*: he has made trust as one of the concomitants of submission [to God], and it is the submission of one's countenance to God, exalted be He. But he did not make submission as a concomitant of faith, in other words, if your faith and certainty have become perfect in such a way that this has had an effect upon your souls and made them purely for God, annihilated in Him, then trust in Him must necessarily

follow [from that]. For the first level of annihilation is the annihilation of acts, followed by the attributes then existence. Once annihilation is complete then trust must follow, which is the annihilation of the acts. If what is meant by *islām* is obedience, then it is a precondition for trust and not a concomitant thereof, in which case the meaning would be: if your faith is sound in terms of certainty, then trust in Him on the condition that you do not act and that you do not see yourselves or others as having any power or effective agency, but that you become obediently submissive, as one who is dead. For the precondition for the soundness of trust [in God] is the annihilation of the remnants of acts and the faculties, as they say, 'If you do not like this [kind of] tree, then pull it out if you can'. As for the remainder of the *sūra* to the end, some of it cannot be submitted to allegorical interpretation, and the rest is known from what has already been mentioned.

## [11] Hūd

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[11:1] *Alif lām rā*: [*This is*] a *Book*: [the interpretation of] this has already been mentioned; *whose verses have been set clear*, that is, the individual entities and realities of which [have been set clear], within the universal world by being confirmed as enduring in those states, not liable to alteration, change or corruption, preserved from every deficiency and defect; *and then detailed*, in the world of particulars and was made clear outwardly and entified according to a predetermined (*ma'lūm*) measure, *from One Wise*: that is, the judgements and differentiations concerning these [entities] come from a Wise One who has based them on knowledge and wisdom so that there can be nothing better or more firmly set clear, [and One who is], *Informed*, of how these have been differentiated in the way that they ought to be according to the wise order in terms of their measure, their timing and their hierarchy.

[11:2] [*Saying:*] '*Worship none but God*, that is, this [Book] utters to you by the tongue of the state and through proofs that you should not associate anything in the worship of God and that you should devote worship exclusively to Him. *Truly I am to you a warner from Him and a bearer of good tidings*': speech by the tongue of the Messenger, namely, that I bring you a warning from the Wise and Informed One of the punishment of idolatrous association and its corollaries, and I [also] bring you good tidings from Him of the reward of affirming [His] Oneness and the benefits thereof.

[11:3] *And [bidding you]: 'Ask forgiveness of your Lord*, in other words, proclaim His Oneness and ask of Him that He forgive the configurations of looking upon the other, the veiling of oneself with the multiplicity, confinement to things and halting with them even your acts and attributes; *then repent to Him*, return to Him by having [your] essences annihilated in Him, *and He will give you fair enjoyment*, in this world, on the basis of the divine law and justice in the case of subsistence after annihilation until the time of your reception at death, *and He will give every person of merit*, in terms of character traits, knowledge and perfections, [*the due for*] *his merit*, in the way of reward and degrees; or, He will give you fair enjoyment of the pleasures of the self-disclosures of the acts and the attributes, upon your disengagement, up to the moment of your annihilation; or, He gives every person of merit in terms of preparedness, [the due for] his merit in the way of perfection and level upon his elevation and drawing closer. *But if you turn away*, that is, refrain from affirmation of Oneness and disengagement, *I fear for you the chastisement of an awful day*, one [that will be] severe for you, the day of the



return to God, the Powerful over all things, in other words, the day on which your incapacity and the incapacity of what you worshipping shall be manifested through His manifestation, exalted be He, in the attribute of His powerfulness whereupon He will subjugate you with chastisement.

[11:7] *And He it is Who created the heavens and the earth in six days*, in other words, He created the corporeal world in six directions — *and His Throne was upon the water*, namely, His Throne which is the First Intellect founded upon the first knowledge and reinforced by it, preceding the corporeal world in terms of existence. If we were to interpret the six days as the period of concealment, as has already been mentioned, and the creation of the heavens and the earth as His concealment, exalted be He, within the differentiations of existents, then the meaning of His Throne being on water would be that it was before the incipience of concealment manifest and known to people, as in when you say, ‘I did it knowingly’, that is, in the state of its being known to me, or while I had knowledge of it, that is, in full knowledge [thereof]. [This is] similar to when Ḥāritha asked the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace: ‘How do you find yourself O Ḥāritha?’, to which he replied, ‘I find myself a believer, in truth’. He [the Prophet] said, ‘For every truth there is a reality. So what is the reality of your faith’. He [Ḥāritha] said, ‘I saw the people of Paradise visiting each other and I saw the people of Hell-fire howling to one another [in agony]. I saw the Throne of my Lord projecting forth’. He [the Prophet] said, ‘You are on the right path. Stick to it’. In many instances in [statements relating to] the divine precepts the primordial substratum (*mādda bayūlāniyya*) is referred to by the expression ‘water’. Among these is the *ḥadīth* in which it is related that the first thing that God created was a jewel (*jawhara*). He then gazed upon it with the eye of majesty whereupon it melted in shame, half of it becoming water and the other half fire. If we were to interpret it [water] with reference to this [jewel], it would mean that His Throne was before the heavens and the earth in essence and not in time, with mastery over the substratum, above it in terms of rank. Should you wish to effect a [spiritual] correspondence with [this and] the differentiations of your existence, the the meaning would be: He created the heavens of the spiritual faculties and the earth of the body in six months, being the minimal period of gestation. His Throne, which is the heart of the believer, was upon the water of the substratum of the body with mastery over it and attached to it formally and in terms of governing it; *that He might try you*: He has ordained that the ultimate purpose of the creation of things be the manifestation of people’s deeds. In other words, We created them so that We might know the differentiated knowledge that ensues from existence, upon which depends [the nature of] recompense in terms of which of

you is best in conduct. For, God's knowledge divides into two. One part precedes the existence of a thing [and is inscribed] in the Tablet. The other part comes into existence afterwards through the manifestation loci of creatures. The trial, which is the testing [of people] is this [latter] type.

[11:9] *And if We cause man to taste some mercy from Us*, to the end of this [verse]: man ought to have confidence in God, trusting in Him, in poverty, wealth, hardship, comfort, sickness and health and [should] not veil himself from Him by the existence of a grace or in his striving or conduct with regard to acquiring [his livelihood], or [veil himself] by his strength or power to pursue his needs or in any one of the ways or means whatsoever, lest there should be despair upon the loss of those means or [alternatively] ungratefulness, the wantonness of comfort or insolence when they are forthcoming such that he then becomes remote from God, exalted be He, and forgets Him so that God forget him. Rather, he should see the giving and the withholding as being from Him and no one else. And so if He should bring upon him a mercy in the way of health or a grace, he should thank Him first by seeing that as being from Him and witnessing the Gracious in the form of [His] grace, which is [done] with the heart then with the limbs by using them in that which satisfies Him and in acts of obedience to Him and by fulfilling His dues with regards to that [mercy]; then [he should thank Him] with his tongue by [words of] praise and laudation, fully certain that He has the power to strip [him] of it, and preserving it by giving thanks for it, seeking more of it on the basis of His saying, exalted be He: *If you are thankful, then assuredly I shall give you more* [Q. 14:7]. The Commander of the Believers [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, said: ‘If the edges of grace reach you, then do not repel the fullness of it by the sparsity of [your] thanks’. Then if He should wrest it from him, let him be patient and not grieve for it, in the full knowledge that it is He who has wrested it from him and no one else because of some welfare that will [ultimately] finds its way to him. For the Lord, exalted be He, is like a father who is compassionate in the nurturing of him, nay, He is more gentle and more merciful, since a father is veiled from what God knows seeing only the immediate and outward welfare, while He is the Knower of the unseen and the visible, knowing what is in his immediate and future best interest. [Let him be] satisfied with His act and hopeful that what will be restored to him will be better than what was wrested from him. For the one who is utterly despondent [despairing] of His mercy is remote from Him, failing to perceive that His mercy is all-embracing because of the narrowness of his vessel [of preparedness], being veiled from [the reality of] His Lordship unable to see the generality and endurance of the effusion of His mercy. And so [the patient one] when He restores it to him, he is not exultant with its existence

just as he did not grieve at losing it. And let him not boast of it to other people, for that is indeed ignorance and the manifestation of the soul. [Were he to see the effusion of His mercy] he would know that that [grace] is not from him or for him: so what reason does he have justify boasting of what is not for him or from him, but for God and from God;

[11:11] *save those who endure [patiently]*, an exceptive clause [referring back] to ‘man’: in other words, this species [of man] is despairing, ungrateful, exultant, and boastful in both states, except those who endure patiently with God, halting with Him in [both] the states of adversity and fortune, hardship and comfort, as ‘Umar [b. al-Khattāb], may God be satisfied with him: ‘Poverty and wealth are [like] two riding animals. I do not mind which of the two I ride’; *and who perform*, in both states, what is in their best interest of what has been mentioned; *those, theirs will be forgiveness*, from the sins of the soul manifesting itself in despair, ingratitude, exultation and boastfulness in both states, *and a great recompense*, in the way of the reward of the self-disclosures of the acts and the attributes and the Gardens of these two.

[11:12] *Perhaps, you might [think to] leave out some of what is revealed to you*: when they failed to accept his speech, may God bless him and grant him peace, by [their] volition and repudiated what he said with corrupt requests [of their own], countering it with obstinacy and mockery, his breast became straitened and was not expanded for the [reception of the divine] speech. For volition attracts speech and the receptivity of the listener increases the energy of the speaker and makes him expansive therein; but if the speaker does not find a receptive locus, it is not facilitated for him and becomes [a source of] anxiety for him. Consequently, God gave him heart with these [words] and spurred his faculty and his energy with His words: *You are but a warner*, and your warning will always accomplish one of two things. It will either remove the veil and have a successful effect on the one whom God has granted success for that purpose; or it will serve as a definitive argument against the one who is not granted such success. *And God is Guardian over all things*, so entrust guardianship of the guiding [of people] to Him.

[11:15] *He who desires the life of this world*: in other words, every person who performs a deed, even if that [deed] should seem to belong to the deeds of the Hereafter outwardly, with the intention of [gaining things of] this world and solely desiring a share of its shares, God, exalted be He, shall repay him in full the recompense for it therein, but nothing of the reward of the Hereafter shall reach him. To every person there belongs a portion of this world in accordance with the plane [of creation] upon which he is and a portion of the Hereafter in accordance with the primordial nature

upon which he was created. Thus if he only desires this world with his deeds, then he [himself] has turned his face towards it and has turned away from the Hereafter, and he will have made, by his being attracted and oriented towards the lower aspect, his this-worldly portion the very thing that veils [him] from his other-worldly portion, such that his primordial nature degenerates and follows the plane [of creation] and his soul begins to employ the heart in the pursuit of its shares and so his other-worldly portion becomes joined to his this-worldly portion: *and therein they shall not be defrauded*, in other words, they shall not be diminished, that is, nothing of the reward for their deeds shall be diminished in this world, because when the heart is configured according to the mien of the soul, its share takes on the form of the share of the soul.

[11:16] *Those are they for whom there is nothing in the Hereafter but the Fire*, by virtue of their hearts being chastised by this-worldly veils and their being deprived from what their preparednesses entailed and their suffering pain as a result of things which they have acquired that do not befit them; *what they contrive*, of pious works, *will fail*, in the Hereafter, since they were [performed] with the intention of [gains in] this world, judging by his [the Prophet's] statement: 'Actions are [judged] according to the intentions [behind them] and for every man is what he intended [...]', to the end of the *ḥadīth*.

[11:17] *Is he who relies on a clear proof from his Lord*: that is, is he who desires the life of this world like the one who is upon a clear proof from his Lord? In other words, there is a tremendous distance between the two in terms of level. As for the one who relies on a clear proof, [this means]: a certainty on the basis of rational demonstration (*burhān 'aqlī*) or one on the basis of an ecstatic consciousness of unveiling and there follows that certainty, *a witness*, from his Lord, namely, the Qur'ān that confirms the veracity of the rational demonstration in terms of the affirmation of Oneness as well as the soundness of [Muḥammad's] prophethood and the principles of religion; and before this Qur'ān [there was], *the Book of Moses*: in other words, there followed the demonstration before this Book the Book of Moses being in that state, *as a standard*, to be followed and an exemplar to be held on to in realising goals and a mercy from the Merciful that guides people, cleanses them and instructs them in wisdoms and precepts. *Those they believe in it*, in reality unlike those who seek the shares of this world.

[11:18] *And who does greater wrong than he who invents a lie concerning God?*, by affirming the existence of another besides Him and ascribing an attribute of His, such as His speech and the like, to another? *Those, they shall be brought before their Lord*, by halting at the first halting place, veiled and forsaken, *and the witnesses*, the affirmers of Oneness, *will say: 'These are they who lied concerning their Lord'*, by means of [their]

idolatrous association. They are then driven away and cursed on account of their idolatrous association, [a sin] which is the gravest of injustice;

[11:19] *they who bar*, people from the way of God's Oneness and describe this [way] as being crooked despite its straightness, and who, in addition to being veiled from the Truth, are veiled from the Hereafter to the exclusion of others from among the followers of religions.

[11:23] *Truly those who believe*, with the faith of certainty in the unseen, *and perform*, deeds that make them righteous for the encounter with God and draw them closer to Him, such as repentance, real renunciation, penitence, worship, patience and gratitude and all those corresponding deeds that relate to the wayfaring folk and their stations; *and who humble themselves before their Lord*, [and who] are self-effacing [before God] and are reassured by Him through yearning and who detach themselves [from all else] for Him, annihilating themselves in Him: *such will be the inhabitants*, of the Garden of the hearts, *the Garden wherein they shall abide*.

[11:27] *The council of his people who disbelieved*, that is the noblemen who were brimming with the affairs of this world, with power over these [affairs] and who were veiled by their intellect and by their rational concepts from the Truth, *said: 'We see you but a mortal like us*, being as they were exoteric folk, halting at the limits of the intellect which is tarnished with illusion and bewildered with vain desires: this is the intellect [used for the pursuit] of livelihood. These [folk] cannot see anyone being at a stage beyond the one which they have attained on the basis of reason and have no awareness of the levels of preparedness and perfection as being one stage after another and one level above another [and so on continuously] to an extent that only God knows. Thus they have not felt the station of prophethood and its significance; *and we see not that any follow you save the vilest among us*, the poor among us, those who are lower [in status] than us, since for them level and status are related to reputation and wealth, exactly as God, exalted be He, said: *They know [merely] an outward aspect of the life of this world; but they, of the Hereafter, they are oblivious* [Q. 30:7]; *[through] rash opinion*, that is, [they are] impulsive and spontaneous opinion since they are of weak intellect, unable to acquire livelihood, while we are folk of reflection and consideration: they said this because they were veiled by their intellect which is incapable of perceiving reality and spiritual merit as its use is restricted to the acquisition of livelihood and halting at the limits thereof. As for the followers of Noah, peace be upon him, they are folk of far-reaching aspirations and intellects that hover over the Holiness not engaged in seeking livelihood or concerned with the means of acquiring or actualising it, which is why they denigrated and scorned their intellects. *We do not see that you have over us*

*any merit*, or advancement in terms of what we are referring to, since for them merit was confined to advancement in terms of wealth, property and reputation; *nay, we deem you liars*’, for being unable to perceive what you affirm or understand what you say despite our abundant astuteness.

[11:28] [*He said:*] ‘*O my people, have you considered if I am [acting] upon a clear proof from my Lord*: that it is incumbent upon you from the point of view of reason to submit to Him, *and He has given me mercy*, that is, special guidance through unveiling that is high above the degree of [rational] demonstration, *from Him*, that is, above the stage of intellect, being from the forms of knowledge that are God-given and from the station of prophethood, *and it has been obscured from you*, for your veiling of yourselves from the inward with the outward and from the Reality with creation. It can only be received through the volition of the folk of preparedness: how then can we compel you and coerce you to it, *while you are averse to it?*, in other words, if you wish to acquire acceptance of it, then cleanse your souls and purify your preparedness, if one has been bestowed on you, and abandon your denial so that the effect of the light of volition might be manifested upon you and you might then [be able to] receive it, God willing.

[11:29] *I do not ask of you any wealth for this*, that is, anything that I desire for myself of the things confined to the [context of the] actualisation of livelihood. I do not demand that of you, so be alerted to my [true] desire, if you are possessors of rational faculties as you claim; *and I will not drive away those who believe*, since they are people of propinquity and stature before God, and if I were to drive them away I would be an enemy of God and one in strife against His friends: I would not be a prophet in that case. *But I see you are a people who are ignorant*, of what makes a man fit for the encounter with God, knowing neither God nor the encounter with Him, because your intellects have taken flight to this world or because you are foolish, hurting the believers with your foolishness.

[11:30] *And O my people, who would help me against God*, who is the Vanquisher over His servants [cf. Q. 6:18], *if I drive them away*, and make myself liable to His vanquishing power by driving them away? *Will you not then remember*, the requirements of the human primordial nature and thus be restrained from what you say?

[11:31] *And I do not say to you, “I possess the treasure houses of God”*: in other words, I [only] claim merit [over you] on account of prophethood, and not on account of any wealth or great property, nor on account of having knowledge of the unseen or by claiming to be an angel, so that you might [justifiably] deny my merit for the absence of these [things]. *Nor do I say*, to the poor believers whom you scorn and regard with the eye of disdain, *that God will not give them any good*, as you claim, because for me ‘good’

is that which is with God and not property — *God knows better*, than me and you, *what is in their souls*, of good. He is best acquainted with their capacities and thoughts and none [except Him] knows the measure of their goodness, because it is tremendous. *Lo! then I*, that is, if I were to deny [any association of] good with them or drive them away, *would be of the evildoers indeed*'.

[11:38] *And he was building the Ark*, to the end of this [verse]: the [literal] exegesis of this, as indicated by its apparent sense, is a reality in which one must believe and a truth which one must affirm, in accordance with what has been transmitted in the historical accounts of the details of the story of the Flood, its time, its modality and its extent. As for the [allegorical] interpretation [of this episode], it is possible to interpret the Ark as Noah's Law (*sharī'a*) borne by him and those of his people who were believers like him, as the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace: 'The likeness of the family of my house is the likeness of Noah's Ark: whose comes on board shall be saved and whoso stays behind shall drown'. And the Flood [may be interpreted] as the mastery acquired by the sea of primordial substrata and the destruction of all those who did not disengage from that [substrata] by following a prophet and cleansing their souls. Similarly, of the words of the prophet Enoch (*Idrīs*), peace be upon him, and of his conversations with his soul something has been related to the effect that this world is like a sea that is brimming full with water, and so if you manage to find a ship to ride upon the destruction of the body you will be delivered from it to your world; otherwise, you will drown therein and perish. On the basis of that, the meaning of 'and he was building the Ark' would be: he was adopting a Law from the wooden boards of righteous deeds and the nails of the forms of knowledge by which deeds are arranged and confirmed; *and whenever a council of his people passed him, they scoffed at him*: as you know is the case with scoundrels and profligates notorious for their licentiousness (*ibāḥā*), scoffing at adherents of the [divine] Law who are restricted by its constraints. *He said, 'Though you scoff at us, in your ignorance, yet we scoff at you*, upon the manifestation of the awful nature of the consequence of your disbelief and your veiledness, *even as you scoff*;

[11:39] *and you shall know*, then, *to whom will come a chastisement that will degrade him*, in this world in the way of destruction, death, sickness, harm, hardship or poverty and how he will be perturbed and distressed at what he is losing, *and upon whom an enduring chastisement will fall*', an everlasting one in the Hereafter in the way of the mastery [over him] of the fires of privation and the dark configurations of vices and utter loss.

[11:40] *Such that when Our command came*, for the destruction of your community, *and the oven*, of the body, *overflowed*, at the point of the mastery of the corrupt mixtures and the excretive moistures over the natural heat and [the mastery of] the natural potency of the primordial water over the fire of the animal spirit. Or [such that when there came] Our command for their spiritual destruction and the oven overflowed at the mastery of the water of natural vain desire over the heart and its drowning it in the primordial sea of the body. *We said, 'Carry therein of every one two pairs*, that is, from every kind of every species two, being their two forms, special and that of kind, which remain upon the annihilation of individuals. The meaning of the 'carrying of the two therein' is his knowledge of their subsistence with the subsistence of human spirits. For his knowledge is part of his all-subsuming ship, since it is composed of knowledge and deed. Thus its knowledge regarding the two is its carrying of the two and his knowledge concerning the two is his carrying of the two therein; *and your family*, and those who are joined to you in your religion and your conduct from among your kin, *save those against whom the Word has already gone forth*, that is, the judgement from pre-eternity that that one should be destroyed for his disbelief, *and those who believe'*, in God from among your community.

[11:41] *And he said, 'Embark therein! In the Name of God be its course and its mooring*, that is, in the Greatest Name of God, which is the existence of every perfect knower from among the individuals of the human species [shall be] its effectuation, the putting into force of its judgements and the propagation of these [judgements] across the sea of the corporeal world, in addition to the establishing, the setting clear and the confirming of these, as you see in the case of every [divine] law whose command is effected, confirmed and set clear by the presence of a prophet or one of the leaders (*imām*) of that community [subject to that law] or one of its religious scholars (*ḥabr*). *Truly my Lord is Forgiving*, of the dark corporeal configurations of your souls and the sins of the garments of physical nature that bring about your destruction and cause you to drown in it sea, if you follow the Law; *Merciful'*, by His effusion of bestowals of knowledge and unveilings as well as luminous configurations by which He delivers you. Were it not for His forgiveness and mercy, you would surely be drowned and destroyed like your brethren.

[11:42] *And it sailed with them amid waves*, of temptations of the sea of corporeal nature and [waves] of the overwhelmingness of its [corporeal nature's] summonings of people and the victory [over them] of its vain desires by their consensus over its requirements; like mountains that block vision and are [too] unstable for travelling along. Or [it sailed with them amid] waves of the deviations of the constitution and the overpowerings of



ruinous mixtures. *And Noah called out to his son*, who was veiled by his intellect — that was [itself] overcome by illusion, being the intellect of livelihood — from the religion of his father and his affirmation of Oneness; *who was [standing] in a place cut off*, from his religion and his law: *‘O my son, embark with us*, that is, enter into our religion, *and do not be with the disbelievers!*, those who are veiled from the Truth and who will be destroyed by waves of the vain desires of the soul to drown in the sea of natural character traits.

[11:43] *He said, ‘I shall take refuge in a mountain that will protect me from the water’*, meaning by this, the brain which is the locus for the intellect, in other words, I shall take refuge with the intellect and the intelligible so that it might protect me from the overpowering of the sea of primordial matter that I might not then drown therein. *Said he, ‘This day there is none that can protect from God’s command, except him on whom He has mercy’*, with the religion that proclaims the Oneness and the Law. *And the waves*, of the vain desires of the soul and the overpowering of the water of the sea of nature, *came between them*, that is, these veiled him from his father, his religion and his affirmation of Oneness, *so he was among those drowned*, in the sea of corporeal primordial matter.

[11:44] *And it was said, ‘O earth, swallow your waters, and O heaven, abate!’*: in other words, a call came from the direction of the Truth by the tongue of the Law [to] the earth of corporeal nature to the effect: O earth, by the command of the Law and by following its precepts diminish the power over you of your vain desire and its mastery by the gushing forth of your substrata over the heart and halt at the bounds of moderation through which it [the heart] acquires its proper condition; and O heaven of the intellect, veiled [as you are] by habit and sense, tarnished by illusion and overcast with the clouds of vain desire that reinforce the soul and physical nature by preparing for it its substrata and means [of nourishment] through consideration, desist from reinforcing it. *And the waters*, of corporeal nature and the lifeline of the moisture that screens off the light of the Truth and prevents real life, *subsided*. *And the affair*, of God, *was accomplished*, by the deliverance of those who were saved and the destruction of those who were destroyed, *and it became steady*, that is, his law was upheld, *upon the Jūdī*, of Noah’s existence and it settled, *and it was said: ‘Away with*, that is, destruction for, *the evildoing folk!’*, who denied God’s religion and worshipped vain desire instead of the truth and substituted the place of the Law with the path of nature.

[11:45] *And Noah called out to his Lord and said, ‘My Lord, lo! my son is of my family:* fatherly compassion and the affectionate bonds of kinship drove him to demand his deliverance on account of the intensity of his attachment to him and concern for his

affair. Despite that, he was mindful of the [refined] manners required in the [divine] presence and the virtuous [form of] requesting [from God], saying: *and truly Your promise is the Truth*, and he did not say, ‘do not break Your promise to deliver my family’. And he said that [which he did say] only because of the presence of some variegation and a remnant within him, since by ‘family’ he had understood those related [to him] by form and natural ties of kinship, oblivious on account of his excessive distress for his son of God’s proviso where He said: *save those against whom the Word has already gone forth* [Q. 11:40], failing to realise that his son is the one against whom the Words had already gone forth. Nor did he [Noah] solicit the compassion of his Lord, but alluded with his words: *and You are the Most Just of Judges*’ to the fact that the Knower, the Just and the Wise does not break His promise.

[11:46] *He said: ‘O Noah, lo! he is not of your family*: in other words, that [the one who is of] your family in reality is the one with whom you share religious kinship, a spiritual relationship and a real connection not a formal one, as in the saying of the Commander of the Believers, peace be upon him: ‘Verily the friend of Muḥammad is the one who obeys God, even if he should be distantly related and verily the enemy of Muḥammad is the one who disobeys God, even if he should be closely related’; *lo! it is not a righteous deed*: He makes clear that he is not of his family by [saying] that he is not righteous, pointing out that his family are the righteous ones, the followers of his religion and his law and that because of his [the son’s] indulging in corruption and error his soul is as it were a unrighteous deed and that the cause of deliverance is only righteousness and not his kinship with you on the basis of form. Thus the one bereft of righteousness shall be denied deliverance. He [God] also intimated that he [his son] was a form of sin that issued from him [Noah], as in the saying, ‘he is one of his father’s secrets’, according to what the Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him, said: ‘The child is the secret of his father’. That is because when he [Noah] had done his utmost in his [prophetic] call [to his people] and expended all effort in the prolonged period without his people responding to him, he became wrathful and invoked [God] against them with his words: *My Lord, do not leave from among the disbelievers a single dweller upon the earth. Assuredly if You leave them, they will lead Your servants astray, and will beget only disbelieving profligates* [Q. 71:26-27]. In this way he was distracted from the presential vision of God’s power and wisdom and [from the fact] that He *brings forth the living from the dead and brings forth the dead from the living* [Q. 10:31]. That invocation of his constituted the sin of his state at the error of his station. Consequently God tried him with the disbelieving profligate whom he claimed, during his state of wrath, was the only thing which they would beget, prejudging God this supposition of his, which

is why He cleansed him of that sin with that punishment. Moreover, in a *ḥadīth* it is stated: ‘The disbeliever is begotten from the sins of the believer’. *So do not ask of Me that whereof you have no knowledge*, with regard to delivering one who is not righteous and is not of your family, and know that righteousness is the cause of deliverance to the exclusion of all else, and that the one who is of your family is the one who has spiritual, and not formal, kinship [with you]. *I admonish you lest you be among the ignorant*’, who halt with the outward aspects of matters, who are veiled from the realities of these [matters]. Thus he, peace be upon him, was alerted by that divine edification and lordly reprimand, and he sought refuge [in God] saying:

[11:47] *He said, ‘My Lord, I seek refuge in You that I should ask of You that whereof I have no knowledge. Unless You forgive me, my variegations and the manifestation of my remnants, and have mercy on me, by [granting me] uprightness and fixity, I shall be among the losers’*, who lose their souls as a result of being veiled from Your knowledge and wisdom.

[11:48] *It was said, ‘O Noah, go down*, that is, descend from the locus of the union and the pinnacle of the station of sanctity and absorption in the unity to the station of differentiation and law-giving prophethood by returning to creation and witnessing the multiplicity at the source of unity, neither wrathful because of [your] being veiled by them [the multiplicity] from the Truth, nor satisfied with their disbelief by veiling [yourself] from them with the Truth, *in peace*, that is, safe from being veiled by the multiplicity and from the manifestation of the soul in wrath and from the existence of variegation and the actualisation of attachment after disengagement or error after guidance, *from Us*, that is, [a peace] issuing from Us and through Us, *and blessings*, as a result of the legislation of the rules of the Law and the establishing of the foundations of justice by means of which everything grows and is augmented, *upon you and upon some communities*, that will issue, *from those with you*, following your religion and your path until the end of time. *And [there will be other] communities*, that is, and there will issue forth from those with you communities, *to whom We shall give enjoyment*, in the life of this world, because of their veiling themselves therewith and halting [thereat], *and then a painful chastisement will befall them*’, when We destroy them for their disbelief and burn them in the Fire of the vestiges and chastise them with the configurations.

If you wish to effect a correspondence [between this and your own existence], you would interpret Noah as your spirit and the Ark as your cognitive and practical perfection through which shall be your salvation at the point of the Flooding of the sea of primordial matter, such that when the oven of the body overflows as a result of the

mastery of alien moisture and corrupt mixtures and there comes the call [proclaiming] its [the body's] disintegration, he [your spirit] rides in it and carries with him [on board] from every two kinds from among the beasts of the animal and the natural faculties and the birds of the spiritual faculties two, that is, their original pair. And [he carries with him] his three sons, Ham (*Hām*) the heart, Shem (*Sām*) the considerative intellect and Japheth (*Yāfith*) the practical intellect as well as his wife, the reassured soul, taking it [the Ark] on its course in the Greatest Name of God and [finally] being delivered with timeless subsistence from eternal destruction in the Flood, while his other wife, the corporeal nature, and his son from her, the estimation that sought refuge in the mountain of the brain, are drowned. And you would [also] interpret its [the Ark's] settling upon the Jūdī and his [Noah's] descent as being like the coming [back] down of Jesus, peace be upon him, at the end of time.

[11:52] *And, O my people, ask forgiveness of your Lord, for the sins of the soul's veils and for halting with vain desire in idolatrous association, then turn to Him repentant, by orienting yourselves to the affirmation of Oneness and to the wayfaring along His path through disengagement and illumination, and He will release the sky of the spirit, upon you in abundance, with the waters of true knowledge and gnosés of certainty, and He will add to you, the strength of perfection, to, the strength of preparedness. And do not turn away from Him, as sinners', by manifesting the attributes of your souls and orienting yourselves to the lower aspect through the love of this world and the pursuit of nature.*

[11:53] *They said, 'O Hūd, you have not brought us any clear proof:* [they said this] because of the deficiency of their understanding and the blindness of their insight to the perception of the proof, [itself] the result of the place of the natural coverings [over them], and so since they could not comprehend him, they necessarily denied him.

[11:56] *Truly I have put my trust in God, my Lord and your Lord; there is no creature, but He takes it by the forelock:* he makes clear the necessity of trusting in God and that this [trust] is a fortified citadel, firstly by that His Lordship subsumes all and the one who is lord over another manages his affair and preserves him such that he has no need of the protection or guardianship of another; then by that every soul-possessing individual is subject to His vanquishing power and authority, captive in His disposing hand, His dominion and His power, unable to act, without power over or effect upon another and immobile in himself, like the dead, and as such there is no need to guard oneself or seek protection against him; then by that He is, *on a straight path*, that is, on the path of justice in the world of multiplicity, which is the shadow of His unity, and consequently He does not give anyone warrant over another except when that person

deserves it on account of some sin or crime. Nor does He punish anyone unless he has slipped, even if it should be a minor [slip]; but such [punishment where it is due] might be for the purpose of cleansing [that person] and raising [him] by a degree as in the case of [the degree of] witnessing. In addition, within all of that he denies them and their deities the power to bring benefit or harm.

[11:64] *And, O my people, this is the she-camel of God:* the interpretation of the she-camel has already been given. As for the deliverance of Ṣāliḥ and those with them, according to the mentioned interpretation, this is like the deliverance of Jesus, peace be upon him, from crucifixion, as related in His words *And yet they did not slay him nor did they crucify him but for them he was given the resemblance* [Q. 4:157] and His words *and they did not slay him for certain. Nay, God raised him up to Him* [Q. 4:157-8], similar to the deliverance of the believing man from among Pharaoh's folk [cf. Q. 40:28], according to what He has alluded to in His words *So God shielded him from the evils of what they had plotted* [Q. 40:45].

[11:69] *And verily Our messengers came to Abraham with good tidings,* to the end of this [verse]: noble human souls possess connections with higher disengaged principles and the holy spirits of the celestial spheres in the way of the vanquishing intellectual lights and the heavenly governing souls and [they also enjoy] mixing with the higher council of the inhabitants of the realm of [divine] invincibility (*jabarūt*) and ingressions into the realm of dominion (*malakūt*). For each soul, depending on its primordial nature, there is a principle that corresponds to it from the realm of invincibility and a governor that nurtures it from the realm of dominion. From the former [the principle] it derives the effusion of knowledge and light, while from the latter [the governor] it derives its supply of strength and deeds, as alluded to by His words *and every soul will come accompanied by a driver and a witness* [Q. 50:21]. And [for each soul] there is also an original resting-place to which it resorts from the Side of the realm of the Divine Essence (*lābūt*) should it disengage, as he [the Prophet] said, 'The spirits of martyrs shelter in lanterns of light that hang from below the Throne'. Every time that it [a soul] is attracted to the lower aspect by inclining to natural physical pleasures, it is veiled by the subsequent coverings from that [Divine] Side and is cut off from the supplies that it receives from that aspect in the way of the lights of invincibility and the angelic faculties. As such it becomes weaker in its perception, since it has become veiled from the reception of those irradiations and [weaker] in vigour and strength, cut off as it is from those supplies [provided] by that [angelic] faculty. But each time that it orients itself towards the higher aspect by rising above corporeal configurations and disengaging from material garments and drawing closer to God, the Principle of all

principles and the Light of all lights, exalted be He, by [acts of] renunciation and worship and by adhering to these principles with cleanliness and probity, with his [this person's] deeds bound to sincerity of intention and devoted conscience, God will reinforce that person, by virtue of his correspondence with the residents of His presence, from their world with the reinforcement of light and power so that it [that soul] will know what no one else knows from among those of its own genus and will have the power to do what no one else will have the power to do from among those of its own species; it will also have moments in which it penetrates that [world] by detaching itself from its body and other moments where it will be remote therefrom depending on what afflicts it from [its] governance of its body. During its moments of connection and penetration it might receive [some knowledge of] the Unseen therefrom, either: as it is, by way of revelation, inspiration, having it cast into the heart (*rū'*) or being apprised thereof by inspecting the form of the Unseen with which it [the soul] is etched, or, by means of call and termination [?], or in the form of scripture in a scroll which it inspects. [Each of] that depends on the orientation of the receptivity of the tablet of its shared sensory domain and the specification of this [tablet] for the species of some sensory objects as opposed to others in the case of the aforementioned states and temporary coincidents. Certain forms of that [Unseen] may be envisioned by it [the soul] which correspond to it in terms of beauty and subtlety and are thus embodied for it either by the power of its imagination and the manifestation of these [forms] within its shared sensory domain, because of the firmness of the connection and its steadiness so long as the imaginal faculty is communicating with it; or by the imaginalisation of these within the universal imaginal faculty, being the heaven of this world, and their being imprinted in its imaginal faculty by reflection, as occurs between counterposed mirrors, in which case it [the soul] is spoken to by the lips in an unseen form as is experienced in truthful dreams, with no difference [between the two]. For the truthful vision and revelation both derive from the same source and there is no dissimilarity between them except [that one is during] sleep and [the other during] consciousness. The recipient of revelation is able to be absent from his senses and their perceptions and to separate them from their functions and suspend their use, connecting instead with the higher disengaged realities by the power of his soul and the actualisation for it of the aptitude for conjunction (*malakat al-ittiṣāl*). The recipient of the truthful vision receives it by virtue of [his] nature; this is the vision that requires no interpretation, as alluded to in the Qur'ān in the case of the visions of God's Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace, where He says: *verily God has fulfilled the vision for His Messenger in all truth: 'You will assuredly enter the Sacred Mosque, God willing, in safety, to shave your heads or to shorten [the hair], without any fear'* [Q. 48:27]. That is

why truthful vision constitutes one of the forty six parts that make up prophethood. The preface to his [Muḥammad's] revelations were truthful dreams that lasted for six months after which they became clearer and came during wakefulness. The imaginal faculty may transfer in both states, that is, in sleep and wakefulness, to its concomitants such that there is then a need for explanation and interpretation. There may also manifest upon that soul trained in that aptitude for conjunction drilled into it the breaking of habits and all kinds of charisms and miracles as a result of the arrival [to it] of reinforcement from the world of power what would be denied by those who have no knowledge thereof of those veiled by habit and those whose hearts are hard and crude and those veiled by deficient intellects that are tainted with illusion and unable to attain the limits or to perceive the Truth; but what would be received by those whose hearts are illumined by the light of guidance and are protected from error and misguidance by means of insight and certainty; or [by] the one whose primordial nature is free of dark veils and foolishness and are untainted by ignorance and coverings as a result of imitation [of others] and [their] faith by virtue of the suppleness of their hearts in their volition and the strength of their receptiveness to polishing. That [reception] is either by the reinforcement of that soul from the world of the angelic realm and its strengthening by the principle of eternity and power, as in the case of 'Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, when in reference to his pulling out of the gates of Khaybar he said: 'By God I did not pull out the gate of Khaybar with my physical strength, rather I pulled it out with a strength that came from the angelic realm and [with] a soul that walks by the light of its Lord'. Or, [that reception takes place] by that [reception itself] issuing from these angelically-supported souls and principles of divine invincibility with which that person has become connected as a result of his supplication, that the angelic realm obey him, being granted by God's permission, His command, His determining, His wisdom and His disposition [of that realm to him]. The verse in which the angels were imaginalised for God's Intimate [Abraham], blessings and peace be upon him, and embodied, is proof of these three states: their addressing him in the Unseen, namely, the good tidings of the [coming into] existence of a child, the destruction of the Lot's people and his deliverance; their reinforcing of him in the breaking of the habit when an old barren woman gives birth from a frail old man; and their effective power in the extermination of Lot's people and their destruction by his invocation. But God knows best the realities of matters.

[11:84] [*Shu'ayb said*] *I see you in prosperity*: when Shu'ayb, peace be upon him, saw [the extent of] their misguidance by their idolatrous association and their veiledness to the Truth by [their worship of the idol] al-Jibt [Q. 4:51] and their desperation to

acquire ephemera through all manner of vices and their extreme covetousness to garner wealth by means of the most evil characteristics, he bid them to desist from that, saying to them [in effect]: I see you [potentially] prospering in your preparedness with the possibility of actualising perfection and receiving guidance. Therefore I fear for you lest your sins should encompass you for your being veiled from the Truth, your halting with some other [besides God], diverting your reflective energies in their entirety to the pursuit of livelihood, your turning away from the final return and restricting your aspirations to the mere securing of the corrupt transient things instead of the actualising of the enduring righteous deeds, and because of your orienting yourselves towards the lower aspect instead of the higher aspect and your preoccupation with the bestial specific qualities instead of the human perfections. So adhere to the affirmation of Oneness and justice, separating yourselves from idolatrous association and injustice which is the sum-total of vices and the mother of ruinous dangers.

[11:85] *And do not be degenerate*, in your corruption, that is, do not go to extremes or to the utmost in corruption, for injustice is the end-result of such [corruption], just as justice is the end-result of righteous work and the sum-total of virtues.

[11:86] *The remainder [which is] with God is better for you if you are believers*: in other words, if you believe in anything remaining, then what would remain for you with God in the way of perfections, felicities of the Hereafter, intellectual assets as well as cognitive and practical acquisitions are better for you than those ephemeral acquisitions in which you endure hardship and which you oppress yourselves in order to acquire and actualise but then abandon at death and nothing remains of them with you except the evil consequences of the implications of such [acquisitions] and the necessary chastisement for the firmly-rooted configurations of your souls. After he had witnessed their denial, their obdurate persistence in disobedience and their mockery of his obedience [to God], as well as his renunciation, his affirmation of [His] Oneness and his integrity with their words:

[11:87] *Does your [way of] prayer*, to the end of this [verse],

[11:88] *He said, 'O my people, have you considered*, in other words, tell me: *what if I might be [acting] upon*, a proof of certitude regarding [my] affirmation of the Oneness, *from my Lord and that He has provided me with fair sustenance from Him?*, in the way of cognitive and practical wisdom, as well as perfectedness and perfection by means of uprightness in affirming the Oneness, would it be right for me to abandon my forbidding of idolatrous association and injustice, and my desire to set things right by cleansing and adorning you [with righteous deeds]? The apodosis of *ara'aytum* ('have you considered') has been omitted because it has [already] been indicated in similar



[passages], as the aforementioned stories of Noah and Šāliḥ, peace be upon them both, and [indicated] by the words here that are specific to him: *And I do not desire to be inconsistent before you*, to the end of this [verse]: that is, that I should seek to procure transient this-worldly benefits [for myself] by committing the very injustices which I am forbidding you. *I desire only to*, set my soul and your souls right by acts of self-cleansing and preparation for the reception of wisdom so far as I am able. And I am only successful in setting things right, *through God. In Him I trust and to Him I turn [repentant]*.

[11:91] *They said: 'O Shu'ayb, we do not understand*: they did not understand because of the existence of rust on their hearts as a result of the sins which they earned. The reason why it was the fear of his clan and not the fear of God, exalted be He, that prevented them from stoning him was because they had veiled themselves with creation from the Truth, which is caused by a lack of understanding, similar to where He says: *You indeed arouse greater awe in their hearts than God. That is because they are a people who do not understand* [Q. 59:13].

[11:105] *And so, some of them will be wretched, and [some] fortunate*: since [the expressions for] 'wretched' and 'fortunate' are given as indefinite nouns in order to emphasise the magnitude [of the affair], this indicates that the ones meant are the pre-ternally and sempiternally wretched or fortunate. And having described them in differentiated divisions, He indicates an exception in the case of the wretched one's everlasting stay in the Fire and in the case of the fortunate one's everlasting stay in the Garden by His words:

[11:107] *except what your Lord may will*, because what is meant by the Fire and the Garden is the chastising of the soul with the fires of privation from what is desired and the pains of the [dark] configurations and vestiges, and [respectively] the rewarding of the soul with the Garden of the actualisation of desired things and pleasures. And [what is meant] by the excepting of both from the everlasting stay is [respectively] the exiting of the wretched one therefrom to what is more severe in the way of the fires of the heart from the veils of the attributes and the acts through wrath, banishment, humiliation, degradation and the fires of the spirit through veiledness, accursedness and subjugation; and the existing of the fortunate one therefrom to what is more pleasurable and more delightful in the way of the gardens of the heart at the station of the self-disclosures of the attributes through beatitude, gentleness, honouring and exaltation and the gardens of the spirit at the station of presential vision through the encounter [with God] and the manifestation of the august glories of the Majesty and what no eye has seen or ear has heard or has ever occurred to a mortal's heart, since the

wretched one is the counterpart of the fortunate one. As for the exiting of the fortunate one from the Garden and into the Fire, that is impossible as indicated by His words:

[11:108] *an unending gift*, that is, one that is not interrupted. Likewise is true of the opposite [case of the wretched], even though His words, exalted be He, [that He is] *Doer of what He desires* [Q. 11:107] suggests it,<sup>86</sup> given that it is a very severe punishment (*wa'īd*). But that is the tongue of refined manner and [the way of] being mindful of the manifest senses before verifying esoteric meanings. Reality dictates that because the wretched one belongs in the various aforementioned levels of the Fire, he will not exit from it but will move from one layer to another and from one grade to another and is thereby eternally condemned. Consequently what is meant by the exception [in his case] is something else and that is that from the perspective of the [exclusive] unity [of God] he is with his Lord and the Lord leads him by his forelock along a straight path: the barren west winds (*al-dabūr*), which is the vain desire of the soul, drives him to Gehenna.<sup>87</sup> There he finds himself at the source of propinquity (*qurb*) alongside the vain desire of his soul and takes pleasure in that which is appropriate for him so that it becomes [for him] the source of bliss. And in his case that which is called the Fire (*musammā al-nār*) disappears and becomes a Garden by virtue of his enjoyment of pleasures therein, even if he should be distant from the bliss of the fortunate one, as related in the *ḥadīth*: 'Watercress will grow forth from the bottom of Gehenna', and it is also [stated] therein: 'There will come a time when Gehenna's gates will be closed shut when there no longer remains anyone in it'. Likewise is the case with the fortunate one, as he passes through the Gardens and its

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<sup>86</sup> In other words, these words suggest that unlike the uninterrupted reward of the fortunate, the chastisement of the wretched might at some point, at least for some of them, come to an end. This verse is one of three or so verses that constitute the *locus classicus* for the discussion and, indeed, the proof-texts of the mainstream tradition's idea of temporary hell-fire, particularly in Sunni exegeses. The concept is developed in reaction to debates about the eternity of hell-fire for Muslim grave sinners (*abl al-kabā'ir*); but also related to early ideas about whether Hell and Paradise will eventually cease to exist. These were significant topics for the heresiographical tradition and, hence, in inter-sectarian polemics. For example, see Ash'arī's *Maqālāt al-Islāmiyyīn*, ed. Helmut Ritter, Istanbul: 1929-33, *passim* (s.v. *takblīd fī'l-nār; wa'd wa'l-wa'īd; abl al-kabā'ir*).

<sup>87</sup> In exoteric exegesis this is the wind said to have been sent to destroy the people of 'Ād: see *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn*, ad. Q. 51:41. The paradox suggested here by Kāshānī — where there is an inversion of the anticipated reality and so distance from God comes to denote proximity — is a favoured hermeneutical tool and a common exegetical motif in the work of Ibn 'Arabī. In fact, this passage of Kāshānī is almost a verbatim reproduction of a passage by Ibn 'Arabī, discussed at length by Steven T. Katz, 'Mysticism and the Interpretation of Sacred Scripture', in *Mysticism and Sacred Scripture*, ed. Steven T. Katz. Oxford: 2000, 46f.

degrees; but the exiting [therefrom] in light of the exceptive statement is something else [too]. Thus in his annihilation in the [exclusive] unity of the Essence and his being consumed by the ardour of fervent love, he will be among the august glories of the Beauty, where the Truth is [at once] the witness and the witnessed, not at the station of witnessing by the presence of the spirit but by the presential vision of the Essential unity in which there remains no entity or vestige of anything other than Him, [the like of which] no eye has seen or ear has heard or has ever occurred to a mortal's heart. If the [use of the] indefinite where He says *some wretched* and *some fortunate* is [meant] to indicate the category [of fate] and not to emphasise the tremendousness [of the affair], then it is possible to interpret the exiting of the wretched one from the Fire as being by rising [gradually] to the Garden from his station by the cleansing of his soul of dark configurations and the consequences of acts of disobedience, in which case he does not constitute one [of those who are] sempiternally wretched.

[11:112] *So remain upright as you have been commanded*, by fulfilling the dues of God through God. For he, blessings and peace be upon him, was commanded to safeguard God's dues and to magnify His command and to direct His creatures by enforcing the judgements of the self-disclosures of the [divine] attributes after his return to creatures together with his presential vision of the [inclusive] unity of the Essence in such a way that he does not move, be still, speak or reflect except through Him, without the manifestation of any variegation from the remnants of his attributes or essence and [such] that no incoming thought occurs to him from without Him without violating one of the conditions of [his] magnification [of God], as he himself said: 'Should I not then be a grateful servant?', when, after his feet became swollen from [standing in lengthy] night vigils, he was asked, 'Did not God [already] give you the good tidings with His words *that God may forgive you what is past of your sin and what is to come* [Q. 48:2]?'; and without [violating] any substation (*daqīqa*) pertaining to the forbidding of indecency and the enjoining of decency and to [his prophetic] warning and call, which is an incredibly difficult thing. That is why he [the Prophet] said, '*Sūrat Hūd* has made my hair turn grey'. It is reported that when the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, saw a certain knower in his dream who asked him about that saying: 'Why, O Messenger of God? Is it because of the stories of the prophets [mentioned therein] and the chastisement that befell their denying communities and the hardship they [the prophets] had to endure because of their communities?', to which he [the Prophet] said, 'No! It is because of His words *So remain upright as you have been commanded*'; *and he who repents*, from his ego and the sin of his existence, *with you*, from among the affirmers of Oneness who have arrived at the presential vision

of the multiplicity at the source of [the inclusive] unity and the station of subsistence after annihilation. ***And do not transgress***, by veiling yourselves with the veil of I-ness and ascribing the non-delimited divine perfections to your individuated I-ness which are confined to seeing [only] you and which necessarily result in veiledness by virtue of being confined to [something] other than non-delimitation. For the Divine ipseity cannot be confined by haecceity (*hādhiyya*)<sup>88</sup> or I-ness (*anā'iyya*). ***Truly He sees what you do***, [and] whether you do it through Me or through your souls.

[11:113] ***And do not incline toward the evildoers***, that is, [those] who are guilty of associating [God] with a latent vain desire produced by the existence of some elusive remnant or some subtle shift towards the affirmation of another [besides God], for that is indeed the swerving that is comparable to [evil] transgression [alluded to] in His saying: *The eye did not swerve, nor did it transgress [its bounds]* [Q. 53:17]; ***lest the Fire***, of [divine] wrath and privation, ***touch you***, by way of [your] becoming veiled and chastisement by [your] separation, of the fires of the Beloved's jealousy, as in where He said to His beloved [Muḥammad]: 'Give good tidings to sinners that I am the Forgiver and warn the truthful that I am the Jealous One'; it is because of this idea that he [the Prophet] said that the sincere are in tremendous danger. For the substations (*daqā'iq*)<sup>89</sup> of the sins of their states are too fine to be perceived by the intellect and their punishment too severe to be estimated by illusion; ***and you will have, then, besides God, no protectors***, to guard you from His punishment, govern your affairs or nurture you, ***and then you will not be helped***, against His might: this is a threat for His friends. How [much worse] then [would it be] for His enemies?

[11:114] ***And establish prayer at the two ends of the day***: since the five senses are sources of distraction that distract the heart with corporeal configurations that rush in on it and attract it away from the Presence of the Compassionate One, veiling it from the light and from being present by turning [it] away from the Holy Side and orienting [it] to the substance of abomination, substituting its intimacy with loneliness and purity with sulliedness, five prayers were prescribed in which the servant can devote himself without distraction to being present and close the doors of the senses, lest there should rush in on the heart any distraction, and [in which] the door of the heart is opened up to God, exalted be He, by orienting [to Him] and by means of the intention for [the reception of] the arrival of the reinforcement of light, and [in which] that person can gather his scattered thoughts and enjoy the intimacy of his Lord away from loneliness alongside a

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<sup>88</sup> Or, this-ness.

<sup>89</sup> This also means 'intricacies' or 'fine details'.

united orientation and an actualised concentration. Thus these prayers come to constitute five doors for the heart that open out to the Side of the Lord through which light enters onto him — in contrast to the five that open up to the side of Deluder and the abode of the Accursed Deluder through which darkness enters — so that the incoming light might dissipate the vestiges of its darknesses and sweep away the dust of its sulliedness. That is the meaning of His words: *Indeed good deeds annul misdeeds*. It is also related in *ḥadīth* that [the period] from one prayer to the next expunges what [sins] are between them, so long as the grave sins are avoided. He has commanded that it be observed at the two ends of the day so that its provisions, for the subsisting of concentration and the mastery of the luminous configuration, might be extended from the first [end] to [include] all the times [of the day], so that maybe that person might be of those *who regularly observe their prayers* [cf. Q. 70:23] by the regular occurrence of that presence and the subsistence of that light, and that perhaps he might sweep away and remove at the end [of the day] the separation and the sulliedness that were actualised in all of the other moments. Now, since the dominance of the natural faculties, those that govern matters like nourishment, takes place at night, when they draw the soul to managing the body by making it sleep in obliviousness to its spiritual world, detaining it from its affair relating specifically to that [world], which is the perusal of the Unseen and the witnessing of the world of the Holy, by preoccupying it with the use of the instruments of nourishment in order to cultivate the body, stripping it thereby of subtlety and lenience and tarnishing it with coverings, there is then a need for making it subtle and pure in wakefulness and for illuminating it and softening it by means of prayers, and so He said: *and in some watches of the night*. That which has been mentioned pertaining to the establishing of prayers at the aforementioned times and the annulling of misdeeds by means of good deeds, is a reminder for whoever remembers his state of presence with God in purity, concentration, intimacy and tasting.

[11:115] *And be patient*, through God as you [endeavour to] remain upright and with God through being present during prayers and not relying on the other; *for indeed God does not waste the wage of those who are virtuous*, those who witness Him while they fulfill the dues of uprightness, maintain justice and satisfy the preconditions for the magnification [of God] in acts of worship.

[11:118] *Had your Lord willed, He would have made mankind one community*, of equal [levels of] preparedness and in accord on the religion of Oneness and the requirements of primordial nature; *but they continue to differ*, in orientation and preparedness,

[11:119] *except those on whom your Lord has mercy*, by guiding them to the affirmation of Oneness and granting them success for perfection: these are in agreement with regard

to beliefs and goals and in harmony with regard to their conduct and their [spiritual] path, their prayer-direction being the Truth and their religion, the affirmation of [His] Oneness and love; *and for that*, difference, *He created them*, so that each one of them might prepare for some task and some activity and select by his nature a pursuit and a vocation, and that the arrangement of the world might thereby become ordered and that the means to livelihood might be established. They [mankind] are thus bearers of the command of God, made to bear the baggage of causes and provisions, and that by which mankind can sustain themselves. By them He has regulated the proper order of the life of this world. The group who are the recipients of mercy are loci for the manifestation of His perfection, by whom He manifests His attributes and His acts, making them a repository for His wisdoms, His gnoses and His mysteries. *And the Word of your Lord has been fulfilled*, that is to say, It has been consolidated, concluded and confirmed, and It is the following: *'I will surely fill Hell with jinn and mankind together'*, because Hell is one of the levels of existence and, from the point of view of [divine] wisdom, cannot be suspended and concealed indefinitely in non-existence while it is a possibility.

[11:120] *And all that We relate to you of the accounts of the messengers, that with which We might strengthen your heart*: since We have apprised you of how they suffered hardships at the hands of their communities but remained firm at the station of uprightness without slipping therefrom, and [apprised you] of how We reprimanded them for their variegations and for the manifestation of some remnant of theirs, as in the story of Noah when he asks for the deliverance of his son; and [apprised you] of the strength of their steadfastness and courage in their certainty and trust [in God], as in the story of Hūd where he says: *Lo! I call God to bear witness and you, bear witness also, that I am innocent of what you associate* [Q. 11:54] to where he says *[Surely my Lord is] on a straight path* [Q. 11:56]; and [apprised you] of the perfectedness of their generosity and virtue in the face of insolence, as in the story of Lot where the daughters are offered up in exchange for the safeguarding of guests from evil, [since We have apprised you of all of that], your heart has been made firm by all of that and your uprightness has been stabilised and your fixity has been strengthened by the dissipation of the vestiges of variegations from you, and your trust, your satisfaction, your certainty and your courage have been fortified and your character and your generosity have been perfected. *And in this, sūra, there has come to you the truth*, that is, that by which the convictions of the believers are verified, *and an admonition*, for them with which they might guard against that for which He destroyed [former] communities, and a

reminder, of what they should follow as [their] religion and adopt as their path and conduct. But God knows best.

## [12] Yūsuf

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[12:1] *Alif lām rā'*. *Those are the verses of the Book that makes plain:* [the interpretation of] this has already been mentioned.

[12:3] *the best of narratives:* by virtue of its lexical expressions and structural composition being inimitable, its manifest meaning (*zābir*) corresponding to reality and its nonmanifest sense (*bāṭin*) an indicator of the form of wayfaring and an illustration of the state of the wayfarer, as in the case of the [other] narratives put together for that [purpose] but [with this] being more corresponding and more concordant than [any of] them.

[12:4] *'O my father I saw eleven planets,* to the end of this [verse]: this is one of those dreams which as we mentioned in *sūrat Hūd* is in need of interpretation (*ta'bīr*) because the imaginal [faculty] is transferred from the noble souls — whose prostration to him [Joseph] was revealed to the soul from the Unseen — to the planets, the sun and the moon, which at the same time were [in fact] nothing other than his parents and his brothers.

[12:5] [*'O my son*] *do not relate your vision to your brothers, lest they plot against you some plot:* this is one of those undifferentiated inspirations (*ilhāmāt*), for an Unseen form of the disengaged spiritual realities may appear, in a universal way that transcends time, to the spirit and the vestige of it then arrives in the heart and it does not become individuated in the soul by differentiation until knowledge of it, as it is, comes about, whereupon there follows fear and caution from it in the soul if it should be something unpleasant or rejoicing and gladness if it should be desirable. This kind of inspiration is called 'warning' or 'good tiding'. He [Jacob], peace be upon him, therefore feared what would happen before it happened and so forbade him [Joseph] from informing them of his vision as a precaution. But his cautiousness may also be due to the vision being proof of his [Joseph's] exalted and honoured status and his greater capacity over his brothers. He [Jacob] thus feared that they would be envious of him once they sensed that [privileged status].

[12:6] *Thus, will your Lord prefer you:* that is, just like that election, by granting [Joseph] that tremendous vision, so He elects you [O Muḥammad] for prophethood, for truthful visions, especially the like of these, are the prelude to prophethood, and so he came to understand from his vision that he is one of the beloved [of God] for whom



unveilings precede their wayfaring; *and perfect His grace upon you*, of prophethood and kingship.

[12:7] *Verily in Joseph and his brethren are signs for those who inquire*, that is, glorious signs for those who inquire about their story and come to know it, [signs] which will prove to them, first, that pure [divine] election is a matter exclusive to God's wish, exalted be He, and is not connected to the effort made by a striving person or the will of a seeker, so that they might come to know the levels of pre-eternal preparedness; and, second, that the one for whom God wills good none can avert [that good] and the one whom He protects none can cause him misfortune or seek [to inflict on] him evil, so that their certainty and their trust might be strengthened and that they might witness the self-disclosures of His acts and His attributes; and, third, that Satan's plotting and his misguidance are something from which no one, not even prophets, are safe, so that they might be on their guard from him. But much more than all that is that these [signs] will apprise them by way of understanding — which is the transferral to the mental — of their states at the beginning, at the end and in-between the two and of the modality of their wayfaring to God in order to incite their yearning and their will, to sharpen their insight and to strengthen their resolve. That is because the similitude of Joseph is that of the heart which is prepared, of extreme beauty, dearly beloved to his father, Jacob the intellect, envied by his brothers from another mother (*ʿallāt*), namely, the five external senses and the five internal ones as well as [that of] anger (*ghaḍab*) and lust (*shahwa*),<sup>90</sup> [all being] the children of the soul, except for the memory, which is not envious of him and does not seek to harm him, leaving eleven [in total], matching their number. As for their envy of him and their seeking to harm him, this is [to be understood as being] through that these [senses] are by their nature drawn to their pleasures and appetites, and impede the use of the intellect, the reflective faculty, for the actualisation of the perfections of the heart such as forms of knowledge and [noble] character traits, and are averse to that. They only want it [the intellect] to use them to actualise corporeal pleasures and the appetites of those animal faculties. But there is no doubt that reflection (*fikr*) looks more to the heart [than to the senses] and it is more intensely and more abundantly inclined to the actualisation of felicities of the heart such as forms of knowledge and virtues [than to those of the senses]. That is the significance of their saying:

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<sup>90</sup> Kāshānī means to list eleven but seems to list twelve, which is why the translation has modified the Arabic to understand anger and lust as subsumed under the one sense or faculty.

[12:8] *'Surely Joseph and his brother are dearer to our father than we are:* his brother [Benjamin] is the practical rational faculty from Joseph's mother the heart, Rachel the self-reproaching soul whom Jacob the heart married after the death of Leah the commanding soul. They said 'surely Joseph and his brother [...]', because just as the intellect entails perfecting of the heart with forms of knowledge and gnoses, it also entails perfecting this faculty by inferring all manner of virtues such as beautiful character traits and noble deeds. Their description of him [Jacob] as being in misguidance, which is to be remote from what is correct, by saying: *Lo! our father is in plain misguidance*, is a deficiency of rational consideration on their part and [an indication of] the remoteness of his way of actualising corporeal pleasures from theirs. Their casting of him [Joseph] into the bottom of a well is their [the senses'] mastery over the heart and their drawing of it towards the lower aspect by the occurrence [in the heart] of love for the body and correspondences with it until it was [finally] cast into the bottom of the well of corporeal nature. Except that he [Joseph] had been dressed in a shirt from Paradise which Gabriel, peace be upon him, had brought to Abraham on that day when he was denuded and cast into the fire and had dressed him in. Isaac had inherited it [from Abraham] and from him Jacob inherited it and attached it to an amulet around his [Joseph's] neck. So Gabriel came to him in the well, took it out and dressed him in it, for otherwise the water would have drowned him and his private parts would have been exposed, as has been related. It [the shirt] is an allusion to the attribute of original preparedness and the light of primordial nature, which is what preserved Abraham from the fire and shielded him by the will of God such that it was coolness and safety for him. As for their [the senses'] drawing of the intellect down so that it considers what pertains to livelihood and the actualisation of the means for that and that it orients itself towards that [pursuit], that is the significance of their words:

[12:9] *so that your father might be solely concerned with you, and that thereafter you might be a righteous folk'*, that is, in terms of organising livelihood and the preparing of the means thereto according to what is desired. As for their tempting of the intellect away from the heart by means of beguiling satanic insinuations and ego-centric censures, despite the intellect's aversion thereto, that is the significance of what they say when they are tempting Jacob away from him [with the statement]:

[12:12] *Send him forth with us tomorrow to frolic and play.*

As for their lie with regard to the wolf [devouring their brother] that is because the irascible faculty, once it manifests and flares up, veils the heart totally from the acts that are specific to him. Apparently it seems to be more powerful in its damaging of him, its incapacitating of his acts and its veiling of him, [all of] which constitutes the meaning

of ‘the [act of] devouring’, despite the fact that the concupiscent faculty, the senses and the remaining faculties are more harmful to the heart and are more damaging to him in the same regard and are more able to draw him down to the lower aspect, being more recalcitrant and more severe in its refusal to receive rational directions and to obey commands and divine prohibitions. The compliance of the heart in consenting to seek spiritual perfections from it and the manifestation of that vestige from the irascible faculty, despite this being the opposite in reality, is the ‘false blood on his shirt’. The turning of Jacob’s eyes white [with grief] at being separated [from his son] represents the wearying of [his] insight and the loss of the light of intellect when Joseph the heart came to be at the bottom of the well of nature. The one of the caravan who brought him out of the well is the reflective faculty.

[12:20] The purchasing of him<sup>91</sup> by the ‘Azīz of Egypt, *in exchange for a very low price, a handful of dirhams*, is their surrendering of him [the heart] over to the ‘Azīz of the spirit, the one from Egypt, the city of the Holy, in exchange for the meanings and gnoses actualised for the reflective faculty that are effused on it from the spirit upon its illumination by his light and its proximity to him. For the reflective faculty, since it is a corporeal faculty while the heart is not corporeal, does not arrive at his [the heart’s] station except when he is covered in the layerings of the soul in the station of the breast, that is, in that aspect which, from where he, is lies adjacent to the soul. But if he [the heart] disengages at the station of the inner heart or arrives at the station of the spirit, which they call the mystery, then that [faculty] leaves him with the ‘Azīz of the spirit and surrenders him to the latter and separates from him in exchange for a paltry dirhams actualised for it because of his proximity to the aforementioned meanings.

[12:21] And the ‘Azīz’s wife, the one called Zulaykhā, to whom he entrusted his [the heart’s] welfare with his statement, ‘*Give him an honourable place. Maybe he will be useful to us, or we may adopt him as a son*’, is the very self-reproaching soul which sought illumination by the light of the spirit, the vestige of which reached it, but which failed to attain fixity (*tamkīn*) therewith and did not attain the degree of the reassured soul. God’s establishing of him [Joseph] in the land constitutes His empowering of him, after the cleansing and being illuminated by the light of the spirit, to [be able to] resist the soul and the faculties, and His granting of him mastery over the land of the body by the use of his instruments in the actualisation of perfections and in the

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<sup>91</sup> The masculine pronoun (he/him/his) will be retained in this passage to refer to the heart/Joseph in order to clarify the referents of the pronouns in the English. In the same vein, in some of the passages that follow, use will be made of the masculine and the feminine to refer to the heart/Joseph and to the soul/Zulaykhā respectively.

governance of it by means of acts of [spiritual] discipline until such time as that [potential] perfection which resides in his preparedness emerges into actuality, as He says, *that We might teach him the interpretation of events*, in other words, that We might teach him about Our act, what We did with him in the way of delivering [him] and empowering [him] with fixity. *And God's way [always] prevails*, through His reinforcement, His facilitating of success and assistance until such time as he reaches the full extent of the perfection of his prime at the station which his preparedness entails so that He might then endow him with knowledge and wisdom, as He says:

[12:22] *And when he reached his prime We gave him [power of] judgement and knowledge*: [one's] 'prime' is the end-stage of the arrival at the original primordial nature by means of disengaging from the coverings of created nature, that which we [Sufis] call the station of chivalry (*futuwwa*).<sup>92</sup> However, most people are not aware that such matters are [completely] in the hands of God and so they press on to [spiritual] striving, struggling and training unaware that the striving, the struggling, the training and the spiritual discipline are also [all] from God. God has made these causes and means for what He has predetermined and that is why He has not separated them by saying, after stating *We gave him [power of] judgement and knowledge*: *Thus, We reward those who are virtuous*, in [their] pursuit, will, struggle and spiritual discipline.

[12:23] Zulaykhā's tempting him away from his soul and her closing of the doors to him is an allusion to the manifestation of the self-reproaching soul in her — for variegation at the station of the heart takes place as a result of the manifestation of the soul, while variegation at the station of the spirit takes place as a result of the presence of the heart [there] — and [an allusion] to her attracting of the heart [Joseph] to her soul by seducing it and gaining mastery over it and adorning its attributes and its pleasures for it, and her closing of its [the heart's] exit to the spirit by blocking the thoroughfares of reflection and the outlets of light with her [the soul's] veiling attribute.

[12:24] His desiring of her is the inclining of the heart to her [the soul] because of the lack of fixity and uprightness. His seeing of the proof of his Lord is [his] perception of that variegation by the light of insight and the consideration of the intellect, as is related in the story to the effect that his father appeared to him and forbade him, or

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<sup>92</sup> Cf. Chittick 1989: 65,373. There is no divine attribute of chivalry but the meaning approximates to God's charity, His creation of creatures in order to endow them with existence and to allow them assume divine character traits by attain such stations, themselves reflections of divine attributes. The Sufis are thus known as the people of good character (*kbuluq*) and chivalry (*futuwwa*).

raised his voice at him — it is also said that he struck the back of his neck with the palm of his hand such that his lust was expelled through his fingernails until it dissipated. All of that is an allusion to the intellect's forbidding him [Joseph the heart] from mixing with the soul by [seeing] the proof [of his Lord] and [perceiving with] the light of insight and guidance, and [an indication of] its effect on him through luminous power and support that necessarily brings about the dissipation of her [the soul's] lust and darkness, permeating her to her extremities and removing from her the dark configuration by means of a luminous configuration. The tearing of his shirt from behind is an allusion to her piercing of the garment of the luminous attribute, which he possessed as a result of [his] virtuous character traits and righteous deeds, by exercising an effect on the heart by means of its attribute, for this is an attribute which the heart acquires from the aspect that lies adjacent to the soul, the one called the breast, which is without question the rear [aspect].

[12:25] As for His words, *wherupon they encountered her master at the door*, this is an allusion to the emergence of the light of the spirit upon the heart's turning to it by means of remembering the rational proof and the coming upon it [the heart] of the holy inrush, its attempt to make the soul subordinate to itself while it struggled to draw it down to its [lower] aspect and the mastery acquired [by the light] over the heart then over the soul by means of this [holy inrush]. As for her statement, *'What is to be the requital of him who desires evil against your folk'*: this is an intimation that the soul insinuates its individual desires in the form of its rational best interests and adorns them such that its corruption is confounded with its rational best interests which [interests] the intellect is obliged to be mindful of, to uphold and to meet [the soul] with. Its [the intellect's] contravention of it [the soul] with regard to these [desires] is the desiring of evil against her [the soul] and [the desiring] of repulsive qualities by virtuous ones, which pertain to matters of everyday life, such as the conniving of women against men and the inclining of the heart to the upper aspect through its [the soul's] false words and claims.

As regards the witness from her own folk, it is said that he was a paternal cousin of hers, that is to say, reflection (*fikr*) which knows that the corruption that afflicts character traits and deeds only comes about because of the soul and its mastery. For, were it to come from the direction of the heart and from the latter's inclination to the soul, then that [corruption] would afflict belief and resolve, and not simply deeds. It is also said that he was a maternal cousin of hers, that is to say, corporeal nature which acts as an indicator of the lower inclination in the soul, that [inclination] which attracts the heart from the direction of the breast and which pursues activities in the earth of

the body. His consenting [with Joseph] and his apprising of the spirit by the light of guidance of the fact that the defect lay in the deed and not in the belief or resolve [of Joseph], which [defect] can only arise from the ego-centric provocation of the soul, is the significance of His words:

[12:28] *So when he saw that his shirt was torn from behind, he said: 'Indeed this is of the guile of you women. Verily your guile is great.*

[12:29] As for His words: *O Joseph, ignore this; and you [O woman], ask forgiveness for your sin*, this is an allusion to the rising of the light of the spirit upon the heart and his [the heart's] attraction to its [that light's] side because of the luminous descending inrush (*nāzil*) and the spiritual incoming thought (*khāṭir*) which turns him [the heart] away from the direction of the soul and commands him to reject her [the soul's] deeds, reminding him lest that inclination occur again. The effect of that inrush and that incoming thought upon the soul takes place as a result of illumination and purification; her illumination by the light of the spirit, which is reflected onto her from the heart, is her asking forgiveness for the dark configuration with which she had overwhelmed the heart. When the heart attains this status of conjunction with the spirit and irradiation by its light and the spirit has been illuminated by the rays of the light of the heart and purified of its impurities, she [the soul] comes to love him fervently, since she is now being illumined by his light and shaped by his configuration. [Her] drawing close to him and [her] desire to arrive at his station is not in order to attract him to his soul or to fulfil her need from him by using him to actualise natural pleasures or by dragging him down from his station and level to her level and where he is then shaped by her configuration and participates in her acts and pleasures as was the case when she was the [evil-] commanding [soul] such that her faculties, even the natural faculties, are affected by what affects her: that is the significance of the statement of the women in the city:

[12:30] *'The 'Azīz's wife has been seducing her boy. Indeed he has smitten her heart with love.* The more that the heart acquires mastery over her with his luminous configuration and the sensorium of his essence the primordial and the one earned through his gradual elevation to the vicinity of the spirit and his attainment the waystation (*manzil*) of the mystery, the more that the corporeal faculties are illumined by his light because of his subordination of the soul and her subordination to him such that their attention is diverted from their acts and they are bewildered, desisting from their conduct with regard to [securing their] nourishment, distracted from the knives of their instruments by which they used to regulate the task of seeking pleasure, nourishment and enjoyment, injuring that power of theirs by which they employ their instruments in their [various] disposals, and remaining dumbfounded in their repasts

which constitute [their] acts of slyness in the organs of the body which the soul has prepared for them during her hospitality to them. That is the significance of His words:

[12:31] *And when they saw him, they were in awe of him and cut their hands, and they exclaimed: ‘God preserve us! This is no human being: this is but a noble angel!’*

As for her saying [to Joseph], ‘Come out before them’, this is her seeking of the self-disclosure of his light out of her volition and her requirement that this [light] come out on her upon the actualisation for her of the preparedness for illumination. When the soul has devoted itself to the path of desiring the heart and her contending with him over the resolve for the wayfaring has diminished and she has been trained to be obedient to him, it becomes time for spiritual discipline in the way of entering into spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) because then the heart will have disengaged from his attachments and impediments and will have disengaged his resolve by the absence of hesitation, since with hesitation of resolve — due to his [the heart’s] attraction now to the direction of the soul, now to the direction of the spirit — there can be neither spiritual discipline nor wayfaring and spiritual retreat becomes invalid due to the fact there is no concentration, which is one of its prerequisites. This [kind of] spiritual discipline is not the disciplining of the soul by making it obedient — for this [kind] does not require spiritual retreat, but [requires] avoiding the commission of contraventions and pursuing the breaking of it and the subjugating of it by resisting [it] through all kinds of acts of renunciation and worship — rather, it is the disciplining of the heart by rising above its [the hearts] attributes, its forms of knowledge, perfections and unveilings in the wayfaring along the path of annihilation and the seeking of presential vision and the encounter, which takes place after [the presence of] immunity against the mastery of the soul, as she [Zulaykhā] says:

[12:32] *Indeed I did attempt to seduce him, but he was immune.* He sought protection from his soul and demanded more [thereof]. *Yet if he does not do what I bid him,* of paying [me] my share, he shall verily be prevented from corporeal pleasures, the spirit of vain desire and objects of sensory perception by being isolated and cut off from these; *and verily shall he be of those brought low*’, by the loss of his dignity and status with us, our forsaking of him and his separation from headship of the assistants and servants in the body. But because isolation was beloved to him as it was to the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, when he used to seek solitary retreat in [the cave of] Ḥirā’,

[12:33] *he said, ‘My Lord, prison is dearer to me than that to which they are urging me.* He said ‘than that to which they are urging me’, and supplicated to God to fend off their wiles from him with his words *and if You do not fend off their wiles from me, then*

*I shall tend towards them and become of the ignorant*, because it is in her [the soul's] nature to incline to the lower aspect and to attract the heart to herself. The occasion for drawing him [the heart] down to her [the soul] so that he never disappears and her illumination by his light and her obedience to him is an accidental matter, one that does not last, while the heart always reinforces her in her deeds since he possesses two natures and two faces. With one of them he tends towards the spirit and with the other he tends towards the soul, and he turns with one face to that one and with the other face to this one. Thus there is nothing closer to his nature than this 'tending' to her [the soul] out of his ignorance, were it not for God's protection of him by causing the upper aspect to prevail [over the lower one] and reinforcing him with the lights of the higher [angelic] council, as the Prophet, peace be upon him, once said, 'O God, make my heart stand firm upon Your religion', whereupon it was said to him, 'You say that even though you are a prophet who receives revelations?' He said, 'And what security is there for me against the fact that the heart is like a feather strewn in an open expanse, the winds blowing it around in every which way!' This supplication epitomises the heart's need [for God], which [state] is ever-obligatory for it.

[12:34] *So his Lord answered him, and He fended off their wiles from him*, that is, He reinforced him with holy support and fortified him with castings from the august glories, turning his face away from the side of abomination to the side of the Holy, fending off thereby their machinations. *Truly He is the Hearer*, of the heart's communion at the station of mystery, *the Knower*, of what ought to be done with it when it is in need of Him.

[12:35] *Then it seemed [good] to them, after they had seen the signs that they should imprison him for a while*: in other words, there appeared to the 'Azīz of the spirit, the women of the soul, the faculties and the spirit assistants, such as the intellect and reflection and others, a certain opinion on which they were all agreed and that was that they should imprison him, namely, that they should leave him in the isolation which was dearer to him. As for the spirit, this was because of its subduing of him by the light of presential vision and preventing him from acts of free disposal and from his attributes. As for the soul and all of the faculties, it was because of their inability to attract him after they saw the signs of [divine] immunity, sincerity of resolve and his refusal to incline to them as well as his dazzling of them with his light and his faithfulness in being needy of God, for otherwise they would never have left him alone in his solitariness. As for estimation, it was because of its retreat from his light and flight from his shadow when he stood firm in his religion and sought refuge in the Truth. As for the intellect, it was because of its illumination by the light of the



guidance; while for reflection, it was because its authority is actualised during solitariness.

[12:36] As regards the two youths who entered the prison with him, one of them was the faculty of spiritual love that adheres to him; this one was the King's cupbearer, the one who gives him the wine of divine love to drink, as is related in the story in which he is [described as being] the cupbearer. The other [youth] was the vain desire of the soul which also does not part with him in any state. For vain desire is the life of the soul which it receives as an effusion from the former because of its [the soul's] vying. This [second youth] was the King's baker who managed the food stores of the city, as is related. Only these two remained by him during the [period of] solitariness and no one else. As for the cupbearer's dream, where he says, '*I dreamed that I was pressing wine*', is the faculty of love being guided to the pressing of the wine of divine love from the grapes of the gnosis of the heart during the sleep of obliviousness to the real presential vision. As for the dream of the baker, where he says, '*I dreamed that I was carrying on my head bread whereof the birds were eating*', this represents the orientation of vain desire in its totality to the actualisation of the pleasures of the birds of ego-centric faculties, their shares and their lusts which were likened to birds, in terms of the way in which it attracts their shares, because of the speed of their movements towards these [shares].

[12:37] As for the words, '*The food, with which you are provided, shall not come to you*, to the end of this [verse]: an allusion to the his [Joseph's] prohibiting the two from their shares until he had made clear to them what the outcome of their affair will be concerning the tasks which they have to fulfil through judicious guidance, right direction, rectification and setting [things] right.<sup>93</sup> His manifesting to them of [his] affirmation of Oneness with his words, *Lo! I have forsaken*, to the end of this [verse], constitutes his urging them to fulfill the incontrovertible divine command, to refrain from inquisitiveness and not to allow the disuniting of [their] orientation or the dissipation of [their] aspirations. For, the specific quality of vain desire is disunity, division and devotion to the various lusts of the contending faculties. The specific quality of [spiritual] love at the beginning, and before reaching the end, is attachment to virtuous attributes and devotion to these regardless of the beauty of the essence. So he called them both to the affirmation of Oneness with his words, *Lo! I have forsaken the creed of a folk who do not believe in God*, in other words, those idolaters who

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<sup>93</sup> The reader is reminded that the two youths are Joseph's faculty of spiritual love and his soul's vain desire, and so in a sense the tasks here fall upon Joseph himself.

worship the graven images of the soul's attributes, nay [who worship] the presence of the heart and its attributes, *and who in the Hereafter*, that is, and who are veiled from subsistence in the spiritual world, [and he called them also] with his words,

[12:38] *It never was for us to associate anything with God*, and [also] with his words:

[12:39] *Are several lords better, or God, the One, the Almighty?* in other words, [what is meant is] if for each of you had several lords, similar to where God says *shared by several [masters], quarrelling* [Q. 39:29],<sup>94</sup> this one commanding him to one thing, that one commanding him to another thing, mutually exclusive in that respect and incapacitated, where in the case of [the faculty of] love, then [lords] such as the attributes and the names, and in the case of vain desire, then [lords] such as the ego-centric faculties, would that be better for him, or a single lord commanding him to one thing, as He has said *And Our command is but a single word* [Q. 54:50], a powerful vanquisher who subdues all and whose command no one impedes and for whom nothing is impossible?

And he [Joseph] compelled them by means of judicious guidance (*siyāsa*) to be united in orientation. For, when the heart is overcome by the [inclusive] unity, its love is fortified against love of the attributes and is turned towards the essence. And if it is trained in the affirmation of Oneness, its vain desire is curbed against devotion to shares and lusts and against separation in the actualisation of pleasures and is content to restrict itself to [the fulfilling of] dues and urgent needs as per the command of the Truth, and not in obedience to Satan.

[12:41] As for his statement, *As for one of you, he shall serve his lord wine to drink*, this is a designation of the task of the first [youth], after being judiciously guided to avoid idolatrous association, [the designation] being the granting the love of pleasures mastery over the spirit; *and as for the other, he will be crucified so that the birds will eat from his head*, an illustration of what the outcome of the affair of the second one will be: his crucifixion represents the preventing of him from the acts of his own soul, the curbing of him from his own exigencies, making him firm and establishing him in the stem of the vegetative natural faculty such that the imaginal faculty has no power of disposal on him nor he on it or on any of the other animal faculties. That is the mortification of vain desire, so that after this mortification and crucifixion the birds of the faculties of the soul eat from his head by the command of the Truth, this being the halting with the dues; *decided is the matter regarding which you sought opinion*', in other words, your

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<sup>94</sup> The full verse is: *God strikes a similitude: a man shared by several [masters], quarrelling and a man belonging exclusively to one man. Are the two equal in comparison? Praise be to God! Nay, but most of them do not know.*

matter stands firm and established in this way [shown]. That is the moment of his arrival and his [attainment of] propinquity to God and the time when the station of sanctity (*walāya*) through annihilation in God becomes manifest. If the two faculties are empowered with regard to the matter he has designated for each of them, followed by His command for the arrival at the station of the presential vision of the Essence and his solitariness comes to an end, then the length of the period of imprisonment will constitute the duration of his wayfaring to God. Once he is able to complete the annihilation, the status of the two faculties would then be proper, since they would then be [functioning] through God and not through themselves, whereupon the period of solitariness would end with the incipience of the period of subsistence through the existence bestowed from the Truth; but this had not yet been completed because of the existence of a remnant, the one alluded to in his words:

[12:42] *‘Mention me to your lord’*, in other words, seek existence at the station of the spirit through love and settlement therein, for when love intoxicates the spirit with the wine of divine love, the spirit rises to the station of [inclusive] unity and the heart to the station of the spirit: at that station the spirit is referred to as being ‘hidden’ (*khafiyy*) and the heart as being a ‘mystery’ (*sirr*), but none of that is annihilation because both of them would in that instance be in existence and engulfed by the light of the Truth. Such a halting at this station gives rise to insolence and I-ness, which is why He says: *But Satan caused him to forget to remember his Lord*, in other words, the Satan of estimation causes Joseph the heart to forget to remember God, exalted be He, by being annihilated in Him, [and this was] because of that lingering presence of the remnant and the seeking of the station of the spirit — for otherwise, he would have been distracted from remembering [both] his soul and his existence. It was because of his being veiled at this station and because of this remnant that he tarried, *in prison for some years*. To this the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, alluded when he said, ‘May God have mercy upon my brother Joseph. Had he not said, “mention me to your lord”, he would not have stayed in prison for some years’.

Or [it could also be interpreted as] that the vanquished Satan of estimation, forbidden and veiled from the Side of the Truth caused the Messenger of love brought near after the raising of his degree, his mastery and the prevailing of his authority as well as his bewilderment in the divine beauty and the overwhelming intoxication, to forget to mention Joseph the heart in the presence of presential vision, because the lover who witnesses the [divine] beauty is bewildered and oblivious to all creatures, including the differentiations of his existence, nay, his very soul, immersed as he would be in the source of the union until his annihilation is complete and his intoxication comes to an

end, whereafter he returns to wakeful consciousness (*ṣaḥw*) and remembers the differentiation. Moreover, when his annihilation comes to an end at his immersion in the sea of Ipseity and obliteration in the Essence of [exclusive] Unity and the period of imprisonment is concluded, God, exalted be He, will give him life through His life and will endow him with an existence from His Essence and His attributes. He will thereby make him see the form of change in the attributes of the soul for the duration of his separation therefrom by means of solitariness and wayfaring to God in the form of the devouring of the fat kine by the lean kine; and [He will make him see the form of change] in the attributes of the body's nature in the form of the mastery of the dry ears of corn over the green ones.

[12:43] As for the King who says, *'I saw in [a dream]:* this is said to have been [one] Rayyān ibn al-Walīd gave dominion and governance of Egypt to Potiphar (*Qitfir*) and not the 'Azīz himself who is called Potiphar. If [the term] *al-'Azīz* means 'King' according to the tongue of the Arabs, then 'the King' [mentioned in the verse] would be an allusion to the Active Intellect (*'aql fa'āl*), the King of the kings of spirits, called the Holy Spirit (*rūḥ al-quḍus*). For God, exalted be He, does not give life to the folk of sanctity upon complete annihilation, that which is the beginning of prophethood, except by means of His breath (*naḥb*) and His inspiration (*wahy*), and it is by conjunction therewith that the differentiations become manifest at the source of the union. That is why they say that when he entered into his [the King's] presence he spoke to him in Hebrew to which the other responded in kind, since he had knowledge of seventy tongues, all of which he spoke in when he was spoken to in them.

[12:44] As for the courtiers who said, *'A jumble of dreams!*, those were the noble faculties, such as the intellect, the reflection that is veiled by estimation, and estimation itself that is veiled from the mystery of spiritual discipline and from [that of] change, as in the case of those who are veiled by these [faculties] and who have halted with them, whom you find reckoning the states of folk who practice spiritual discipline to be [mere] fairytales. As for the messenger of love who 'remembered after a time', he only remembered by means of the manifestation of the angel of the Holy Spirit and the latter's inspiration to him and causing him to see the differentiations of his existence by returning to the multiplicity after the unity — otherwise he would be in the state of annihilation, consumed by the source of the union, seeing therein neither the existence of the heart nor anything else: how then would he be able to remember? He would only remember as a result of his becoming manifested by the light of the Truth after his non-existence.

[12:49] As for the year, *in which the people will be granted relief, and in which they will press [fruit]*, that is the moment of his giving of enjoyment to his soul during complete reassurance and universal security.

[12:51] As for the statement of the women of the faculties: *'God preserve us! We know of no evil in him'*, and the statement of the 'Azīz's wife: *'Now the truth is out'*, [these constitute] an allusion to the illumination of the soul and of the faculties by the light of the Truth, their assumption of the attribute of justful speech and truthfulness, the actualisation of the trait of justice by means of the light of [inclusive] unity, the manifestation of love immediately upon separation after union, and [to] the perfection of the soul's reassuredness because of its affirmation of the heart's merit and sincerity, and [of] its guilt and his [the heart's] innocence. For part of the [process of the] perfection of the soul's reassuredness is its admission of guilt and its seeking of forgiveness for the excesses it has committed when it was a commanding [soul] and its holding on to divine mercy and lordly protection [from sin].

As for the King's wish to use him for himself, that represents his making the heart as the viceregent (*khilāfa*) over the kingdom after complete perfection, as is related in the story [to the effect] that he [the King] made him sit on his throne, placed his own crown on his head, gave him his ring to wear and girded him with his sword as well as removed Potiphar from office. After Potiphar died, the King gave him his wife, Zulaykhā, in marriage and then himself abdicated the throne in favour of him and devoted himself to worship of his Lord. All of that is an allusion to the station of viceregency (*khalīfa*) of the Truth, similar to where He said to David, *We have indeed made you a viceregent on the earth* [Q. 38:26]. The death of al-'Azīz is an allusion to the arrival of the heart at his station and the departure of the spirit to his presential vision of the unity. As for his [Joseph's] marriage to al-'Azīz's wife, that is an allusion to the heart's giving the soul enjoyment of shares after reassurance, for the noble illumined soul, through [its enjoyment of] shares, becomes stronger in observing the preconditions for uprightness, enforcing the laws of justice, inferring the principles of knowledge and deed, which were the two children whom, according to the story, she bore him, Ephraim and Misha. It is related that when he entered upon her he said to her, 'Is this not better than what you once sought?', and found her a virgin, which is an allusion to the virtuousness of her state of reassurance during enjoyment while being mindful of justice. As for her virginity, this is an allusion to the fact that the spirit does not mix with the soul on account of his abiding sanctity and the impossibility of his engaging her, for his demands are universal and cannot comprehend her particulars, unlike the heart.

She was his wife because of his possessing mastery over her and because the effect of his command and authority had reached her by means of the heart and by virtue of her being subject to his governance in reality. His request to be placed in charge of the storehouses of the land and his description of himself as being a worthy custodian and skilled [for the task] is because the heart perceives material particulars and is able to preserve them, unlike the spirit, and so by its preparedness it entails the reception of that meaning from the bestower who is the angel of the Holy Spirit. The establishing of him in the land that he may settle in it wherever he wished constitutes the granting to him of succession (*khilāfa*) by means of subsistence after annihilation upon arriving at the station of fixity (*tamkīn*), which itself is ‘the wage of virtuous’, that is, the one who worships his Lord at the station of presential vision by virtue of his return from the source of union to [the mode of] differentiation.

[12:57] *Yet the wage of the Hereafter*, that is, the spiritual share in the way of the pleasure of the presential vision of the Beauty and the inspection of the lights of the august glories of the Enduring Face, *is better for those who believe*, with entific faith, *and guard against*, the remnants of I-ness.

When he returned to the station of differentiation and sat on the throne of kingship for his viceregency, his brothers came to him, the animal faculties, after he had been separated from them for a long time in the prison of spiritual discipline and spiritual retreat (*khalwa*) in Egypt of the Holy Presence and [after his] immersion in the source of union.

[12:58] *And they entered to him*, seeking proximity to him by means of having been edified with the refined manners (*ādāb*) of spiritual individuals, because of the reassuredness of the soul and its illumination and the illumination by it of those [animal] faculties, and their having been trained by the configurations of virtues and [noble] character traits, seeking provision from the nourishing beneficial forms of knowledge in the way of character traits and the divine precepts; *and he recognised them*, together with the virtuousness of their state and their goodliness, by means of [his] astuteness and purity, and their impoverished need of the meanings they were seeking from him, *but they did not recognise him*, because of the superiority of his level over theirs, as a result of [his] disengagement, and his possession of qualities which they were unable to comprehend, and that is why he sought the presence of the practical rational faculty with his statement:

[12:59] *‘Bring me a brother of yours from your father*, since universal meanings that are attached to deeds can only be comprehended by that [rational] faculty. Know also that for those beloved [of God] their unveilings precede their [spiritual] efforts. Thus they

teach their faculties the divine precepts and rulings and direct them after the arrival, even if their souls should be reassured before that [arrival]. As for the provision with which he equipped them is a small measure of particulars which they are able to comprehend and work with.

[12:60] He says, *But if you do not bring him to me, there will be no measure for you*, of universal meanings actualised, *with me; and do not come near [me]*, since your level is remote from mine, unless by means of him [Benjamin]. But since the practical rational faculty, because it has not departed from the station of pure intellect to the station of the breast, is not able to accompany the sensory faculties and cast [upon them] the particular meanings that cause them to function or to bring about the movement of the yearning longing faculty towards rational best interests:

[12:61] *They said, 'We will try to tempt his father away from him*, that is, by purifying preparedness for the reception of his [Jacob's] effusion.

[12:62] As for his statement, *to his young men: 'Place their merchandise in their saddlebags*, this is an allusion to the heart commanding its young men, the vegetative faculties, at the giving of enjoyment to the soul during [its] reassuredness, to supply the substrata for their faculties by which they are nourished and by which they are empowered to earn their perfections, since these are that merchandise of theirs from which they can seek provision. Their saddlebags represent the instruments of their perceptions and earnings; *so that they may*, recognise their faculties and their capacities to earn, *when they return to their folk*, from among all of the animal faculties, such as the irascible, the concupiscent and their like, *and so they might come back'*, to the station of profit-making and seeking provision from the nourishment of meanings and forms of beneficial knowledge from that merchandise.

[12:63] *So when they went back to their father*, having purified their preparedness and been trained by the configurations of virtues they required of him that he send forth with them the practical rational faculty to supply them permanently with virtuous character traits by means of meanings. In other words, they sought to be supplied from his effusion; *that we may obtain the measure*, that we may profit from him. For surely we shall not use him to actualise our goals and bring about his perdition, as we did, during the time of ignorance, with his brother [Joseph]. Rather, we will guard him well by obligating ourselves to him and being mindful of him on the path to perfection.

The taking from them of a covenant and a pledge in sending him forth with them expresses the precedence given to the sound conviction of faith over deeds and

obligating them to that covenant first. Otherwise their state as they embarked on the task would not have been proper and would not have had a wholesome effect.

[12:67] [*O my sons*] *do not enter by one gate*, that is, do not wayfare along the path of a single virtue, such as munificence for example but not bravery; or do not conduct yourselves according to one of God's descriptions only, exalted be He, for the presence of the [inclusive] unity is the source of all virtues and the essence of the [exclusive] unity is the principle of all the attributes. Thus wayfare along the path of all of the separate virtues until you have acquired the attribute of justice whereafter you can turn to the presence of the [inclusive] unity, and conduct yourselves according to all of the attributes until the essence is unveiled to you. It is related in a *ḥadīth* that on the Day of Resurrection, God, exalted be He, discloses Himself to the various religious groups according to the belief of each [one of them] and so they recognise Him. But He then undergoes a transmutation into another form and they deny Him. *Yet I cannot avail you against God anything*, in other words, I cannot ward off anything from you should He withhold from you the granting of success or veil you with certain veils from your perfections, for the intellect can only effuse knowledge, not bring a preparedness into existence or remove a veil.

[12:68] *And when they entered*, that is, [when] they obeyed the command of the intellect to wayfare along the path of all of the virtues, it did not avail them from the direction of God, *anything*, in other words, their being veiled by the veil of Majesty and privation from the pleasure of arrival did not avert anything from them, because the intellect is only guided to primordial nature and only itself guides to gnosis. As regards being illumined by the light of the Beauty and delighting in the pleasure of yearning by seeking contact, and tasting of fervent love from the perfection of the Majesty and the Beauty, nay, the Majesty of the Beauty and the Beauty of the Majesty, that is something that can only be facilitated by the light of guidance that comes from the Truth [Himself]; *it was but a need in Jacob's soul*, to make them perfect by means of virtues. *And verily he was possessed of knowledge*, because God had taught him, not because he enjoyed eyewitness or presential vision; *but most of mankind do not know*, that, and so they suppose that perfection is how much knowledge the intellect possesses; or [it could be understood as] mankind of the senses who do not know the knowledge of the universal intellect;

[12:69] *he [Joseph] took his brother into his arms*, by virtue of the correspondence between them in terms of disengagement;

[12:70] *he put the drinking-cup into the saddlebag of his brother*, the drinking-cup with which he distributes the measure to people, in other words, his faculty for



comprehending forms of knowledge from which he can then derive the knowledge of divine precepts and infer the canons of justice. For the practical rational faculty becomes more able to comprehend rational concepts after disengaging from the garments of estimation and imagination, as does the considerative one, which is the faculty that manages the affair of livelihood, and the one tarnished with illusion in its initial state.

The attribution of theft to him is because of his habituation, in the locus of estimation, to comprehending [only] the particulars of those meanings attached to substrata, and [because of] his remoteness from comprehending universals. So when he became better enabled to [comprehend] them after being taken into his brother's arms and drawing from him that faculty by means of disengagement, it was as though he had stolen [something] whereas he had not stolen. As for the crier who accused them of theft, he is illusion and because of the presence of something illusory [?] the state of all changed from what it had been; their [the cameleers] non-compliance with him and his supposing that to be the case was a deficiency on their part [?].

The load [of one camel] promised for whoever brings [back] the goblet represents the obligations of the divine law (*taklif*) which come about by means of the practical intellect when it draws that knowledge from the heart. The goblet is the faculty of preparedness by which his knowledge is actualised. The one missing it who searches their saddlebags and the one who pulls it out of his [Joseph's] brother's saddlebag is reflection, whom the heart had sent for that task.

[12:76] And since the religion of the Holy Spirit is the verification of gnosés and considerative realities, which has nothing to do with action, *he could not have taken his brother*, by urging him to practical things or using him for the [pursuit of] virtues, *according to the king's law*, since his religion is knowledge and his knowledge is rational comprehension, *unless God willed*, that is, at the moment of the illumination of the soul by the light of the heart that is derived from Him and of the expanding of the breast that is receptive of practical things, which is the raising of degrees [referred to], since the soul at that instance rises to the degree of the heart and the heart to the degree of the spirit at the station of presential vision; *and above every possessor of knowledge*, such as the faculties, *is one who knows better*, such as the practical intellect, above whom is the heart, above whom is the considerative intellect, above whom is the spirit, above whom is the Holy Spirit, and God, exalted be He, is above all, Knower of all Unseens.

[12:77] As for the significance of: *They said, 'If he is stealing, a brother of his stole before'*, it is that the heart, alone from among all of the faculties, had been prepared for this meaning beforehand, and so they continued not to recognise the two [Joseph and

his brother], accusing the two before their father in order to actualise what they sought and to seek a pleasure beyond the one they sought [?]. It is said that Abraham, God's blessings and peace be upon him, used to own a belt which the eldest of his children would inherit. So after Isaac, Joseph's paternal aunt inherited it since she was the eldest of the children, and she had also raised Joseph after the death of his mother Rachel. But when he came of age, Jacob wanted to take [possession of] it [the belt] from her, but she would not renounce [possession of] it. So she tied the belt underneath his clothes, peace be upon him, and then said that she had lost the belt. When it was found upon him [Jacob], it was handed over to her and Jacob left it with her until she died. This [belt] is an allusion to the station of chivalry which he [Jacob] inherited from Abraham the spirit before the station of sanctity, during the time of his youth. It was the reassured soul that had tied it<sup>95</sup> around him, the one that had embraced it at the time of the death of Rachel the self-reproaching [soul]. Jacob's desire to strip her of this [belt] is an allusion to the fact that the intellect desires to be elevated to the [station of the] earning of gnoses and realities; and when he finds it [the intellect] described with qualities of excellence at the station of chivalry, he is satisfied with it and leaves him with the reassured soul wayfaring along the path of virtues until she [the reassured soul] passes away through annihilation in God at the station of sanctity. But God knows best. As for Joseph's keeping his words secret in his soul, that is his awareness of their inability to perceive his station and their falling short of his perfection, and these [words] were: *you are a worse case*.

The one who requested to be taken by Joseph the heart in place of his brother the practical intellect was [the faculty of] estimation since it tends to interfere with rational concepts and yearns to be elevated to the horizons of the intellect; his [estimation's] judgement concerning these [concepts] in an improper way and their [the brothers'] inclination to his leadership of them, excluding the practical intellect, is on account of the correspondence between them in terms of their attachment to substrata and his [estimation's] wish to actualise for them their goals in the way of corporeal pleasures.

[12:79] But when the heart found that his property, being the comprehension of rational meanings, with the practical intellect and not [with the faculty of] estimation: *He said, 'God forbid that we should take anyone save him with whom we found our property; for then truly,* if we were to take estimation in his place, and take him into our arms and cast on him what we cast to our brother [Benjamin], we would be committing

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<sup>95</sup> This 'it' refers to the belt, the station of chivalry.

a terrible injustice since we would be assigning something a place to which it does not belong.

[12:80] Their despairing of him is their sensing that estimation would not be placed in charge of them and they would not be permitted to enjoy his exigencies or judgement. The most senior of them who reminded them of the pledge they had given to their father, [the pledge] being the conviction of faith, and [who reminded them] of their failure regarding Joseph when estimation had ruled, was reflection (*fikr*); that is why the exegetes he was the one who made the fairest decision regarding Joseph and prevented them from killing him. As for his words, *So I will never leave this land until my father permits me*, this means I shall not make any move without the judgement of the intellect, as opposed to estimation, until I die.

[12:81] His command to them to go back to their father constitutes his judicious guiding of them to obey rational commands; *and we testified only regarding what we knew*, in other words, all we know is that that property being in the possession of the practical intellect can only be a deficiency and a theft, since we have no awareness of it nor of the fact that it is [actually] a perfection; *we were not*, guardians of the rational entific meaning [of that property], since we are only able to perceive that which is in the visible world [and not the Unseen], which is the case with the folk of our town, the city of the body from among the vegetative faculties.

[12:82] *and the caravan with which we approached*, from among the animal faculties. So ask them that they might inform you of your son's thievery.

[12:83] '*Nay, he said, but your souls have beguiled you into something*: that is, your physical bodily natures adorned for you the delighting in corporeal pleasures and sensory passionate desires, such that you supposed these to be perfection and [supposed] the pursuit of rational concepts, adherence to divine precepts and being under the command of virtues a deficiency. *Yet beautiful patience!*, in other words, it is for you to be beautifully patient in always implementing the divine precepts and [conducting yourselves according to] the virtues, to halt with the judgement of the Law and [that of] the intellect; or [it means] beautiful patience in partaking of enjoyment according to the [dictates of the] Law is more comely for you than disregarding the Law and dogged pursuit of the judgements of nature; or [it means], then for me it is to be beautifully patient with regard to Joseph and his brothers continuing to seek the irradiation of the holy lights, the sending down of revealed judgements and deducing of the bases thereof, something to which I have no access. Therefore I must be separated from them until they are free to look after the best interests of both sides and to fulfil the dues of both matters, namely, those of everyday life and the final return. For just as the intellect

entails the pursuit of perfection and the making good of the final return, so it entails the making good of the body and the organising of the means of livelihood, as well as the balancing of the constitution by means of nourishment and the nurturing of faculties by means of pleasures; or [it means] then it is my task to endure with beautiful patience [all of] that. *It may be that God will bring them all [back] to me*, from the direction of ‘the highest horizon’ [cf. Q. 53:7] and by elevation from my stage to what my consideration and vision entail in the way of being mindful of both sides and [what] my station and my level [entail] in the way of mediating between the two waystations. *Indeed He is the Knower*, of realities, *the Wise*’, in governing the worlds, and so He does not leave them to be mindful of the upper aspect but oblivious to the lower aspect so that the city of the body is then ruined and its people perish. That was before the complete protection, which we have mentioned, since this is the station of striving after the unveiling and the wayfaring along the path of uprightness after the affirmation of the Oneness.

[12:84] *And he turned away from them*, that is, he abandoned their side and became oblivious to their state because of his affectionate yearning for Joseph the heart and his being attracted to his [Joseph’s] side. *And his eyes turned white with grief*, firstly, with his [Joseph’s] fall to the bottom of the well, the weakening of the faculty of his insight because of the excessive grief over the separation from him, and then because of his [Joseph’s] elevation above his [Jacob’s] stage and his [Joseph’s] annihilation in the affirmation of the Oneness, and his [Jacob’s] being left behind and his inability to comprehend him [Joseph] because of his station and his perfectedness, and therefore his vision remained dim and unable to see Joseph’s state; *such that he was [filled] with suppressed agony*, filled as such because of the separation from him.

[12:85] As for their saying: *‘you will never cease remembering Joseph*, this is an allusion to the intensity of his affectionate yearning, longing and attraction to the aspect of the heart, in that condition, to the exclusion of them, by virtue of the intimate correspondence between them in terms of disengagement and inclination to the higher world.

[12:86] As for his words, *and I know from God what you do not know*, is an allusion to the fact that the intellect knows that the heart will soon return to the world of creatures and will halt with habit after having been to the Side of the Truth and having separated from the rule of habit, similar to the question once posed: ‘What is the end?’, to which it was said, ‘It is to return to the beginning’.

[12:87] It was on the basis of that knowledge that he said, *O my sons, go and enquire about Joseph and his brother*, and that was at [the moment of] his being unengaged in

wayfaring totally and at the arrival of the effect of that disengagement to the intellect, by virtue of its proximity to his level in terms of descent (*tanazzul*) and drawing down close (*tadallī*),<sup>96</sup> such that he commands [his children] the faculties to draw him [Joseph the heart] down to their station by seeking the shares in the form of the corporeal concentration (*jam'iyā*) and [by] managing their particular livelihood and best interests. That was the spirit which forbade them from despairing of Him, since the believer finds this spirit and beatitude in the second life which will be through God and in which he will be alive through Him and will enjoy in His presence all manner of bliss and the pleasures of the Gardens of the acts, the attributes and the Essence, by means of the soul, the heart and the spirit, in contrast to the disbeliever, as He has said: *Indeed none despairs of the [gracious] Spirit of God save the disbelieving folk*'.

[12:88] As for their statement: [*'O 'Azīz*] *misfortune has befallen us and our family*, this is an allusion to their difficult situation, their evil state and straitened condition as they halt with dues; *and we have come with reject merchandise*: an allusion to their weakness, by virtue of the paucity of the substrata of their faculties and the falling short of their nourishment to secure [for them] what they desire. And their saying, *so fill up for us the measure*, is an attempt to solicit his sympathy by seeking the shares.

[12:89] As for his statement, *'Do you realise what you did to Joseph and his brother [...]?*', this is an allusion to the descent of the heart to their station in the locus of the breast so that they might recognise him and remember their state at the beginning and what they did to him during the time of ignorance and misguidedness.

[12:90] As for their saying, *'Is it really you, Joseph?'*, this is a marvelling on their part at his state in that luminous configuration and courtly splendour and the remoteness of [all of] that from his state at the very beginning. As for his words, *God has truly shown favour to us*, to the end of this [verse]: is an allusion to the causative factor in all of that and the cause of his perfection.

[12:91] Their statement, *'By God, truly God has preferred you over us*: an allusion to the faculties, upon uprightness, being guided to his perfection and their falling short of that.

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<sup>96</sup> Ibn 'Arabī uses *tadānī* and *tadallī*, which Chittick translates as 'drawing close' and 'coming down', respectively. The context of the terms is the mutual waystation where the vision of the God, the Real, takes place, where the servant ascends and the Served One comes down (see Chittick 1989: 342). The expressions are clearly derived from Q. 53:8, the *Sūrat al-Najm*, where both appear, particularly elusively in terms of their referents, in what Muslim tradition has understood to be a description of the Prophet seeing his Lord (sometimes, modified to a vision with Gabriel).

[12:92] As for his words, *‘There shall be no reproach on you this day* — since these [faculties] are innately disposed to the acts of [physical] nature [which they commit]. And his words, *God will forgive you*: an allusion to their exoneration from sin upon being illumined by the light of virtue and being subject to His command upon perfection.

[12:93] The shirt represents the luminous configuration which the heart acquired as an attribute upon arriving at the [inclusive] unity at the source of union and acquiring the attributes of God, exalted be He. It is also said that this was the inherited shirt which was in his amulet when he was cast into the well, [the shirt] being an allusion to the light of original primordial nature, whereas the former is an allusion to the light of perfection that is actualised for him after the arrival: the former is more likely to open up the eye of the intellect. For with the intellect, when its insight is not coloured by the light of guidance that comes from the Truth, it becomes blind to the divine attributes; *and bring me all your folk*’, that is to say, come back to me every last one of you in the station of temperance and observing moderation in acts — as the heart sits in the middle between two aspects, lowness and highness — and join me and submit to my command, draw near to me and do not become remote from my station by pursuing corporeal pleasures as required by your natures.

[12:94] His ‘scent’, which he [Jacob] sensed from [such] a distance, constitutes the arrival of the effect of the heart’s return to the knowledge of the intellect and of what is rational, and its turning to it from sheer affirmation of Oneness by equipping the animal faculties with the provision of shares according to the stipulations of justice, the canon of the divine law and the intellect. It is said that he equipped the cameleers with the fairest [provisions] before sending it off in the direction of [the land of] Canaan.

[12:95] As for his ‘misguidance of old’, this is his fervent love for the heart from pre-ternity and his distraction from their aspect.

[12:96] As for his saying, *‘Did I not say to you, “Indeed I know from God what you do not know?”*’, this is an allusion to his prior knowledge of the heart’s return to the station of the intellect.

His asking of forgiveness for them is his establishing of them upon the judgement of the intellectual virtues by means of uprightness after their purification, their acquisition of intelligence and their reception of luminous configurations after shedding the dark ones. Their entry upon Joseph is their arrival at the station of the breast at the point of uprightness. Their entry into Egypt is the being of all in the presence of the divine concentration of the [inclusive] unity despite the variance in their levels of excellence at

the source of the union of the unity. The raising of his parents upon the throne represents the elevation of the two levels of the intellect and the soul over the levels of the remaining faculties and the increase in their propinquity to him and the potency of their authority over these [other faculties]. Their falling down in prostration before him represents the submission of all and their obedience to him by the command of the divine [inclusive] unity without their souls' exercising any motion, such that not a single hair or vein moves in them except by means of God.

[12:100] The interpretation of his vision is the [conceptualised] form of what was established in his first preparedness in the way of [his] reception of that perfection. *Indeed my Lord has made it true*: He has brought it out from potentiality into actuality. *And indeed He has been gracious to me*, by [granting me] subsistence after annihilation, *since He brought me out of*, the prison of solitary retreat in which I was veiled from the presential vision of the multiplicity at the source of unity and [from] the contemplation of the Beauty in the attributes of the Majesty; *and brought you from*, the desert outside Egypt of the divine presence, *after Satan*, of illusion, *had incited ill feeling between me and my brethren*, in goading them to cast me into the bottom of the well of physical nature by engrossing themselves in and doggedly pursuing corporeal pleasures. *Truly my Lord is Gentle*, towards His beloved ones by facilitating for them perfection and regulating their affairs in accordance with His pre-eternal wish and eternal solicitude. *Truly He is the Knower*, of what preparednesses contain, *the Wise*, in ordering the causes of perfection and helping the prepared to arrive there successfully.

[12:101] *My Lord, indeed You have given me [something] of sovereignty*, that is, of the Oneness of sovereignty which is the Oneness of the acts, *and You have taught me the interpretation of events*, that is, the meanings of things hidden in the Unseen and what a [given] form of the Unseen ultimately refers to, something which belongs to the affirmation of the Oneness of the attributes, *Originator*, of the heavens of the attributes at the station of the heart and [of] the earth of the affirmation of the Oneness of the acts at the station of the soul. *You are my Protector*, in the affirmation of the Oneness of the Essence in this world of the sovereignty and the Hereafter of the spiritual [angelic] realm. *Receive me in death in submission [to You]*: annihilate me from myself in a state of being obedient to Your command and not insolent as a result of the subsisting of [my] ego, *and join me to the righteous'*, who are firmly fixed at the station of uprightness after being annihilated in the affirmation of Oneness.

[12:106] *And most of them when they believe in God*, with cognitive faith, *only do so by ascribing partners [to Him]*, by affirming [the existence of] an existent other than Him;

or [when they believe] with entific faith, then only by committing idolatry by being veiled in their I-nesses;

[12:107] *a pall of God's chastisement*, a veil, issuing from a deeply-rooted dark configuration, that obstructs their preparedness from receiving perfection; *or the coming*, of the minor resurrection, *upon them suddenly, while they are unaware*, of the light of unveiling and the affirmation of Oneness and so their veil is not lifted and they remain forever veiled.

[12:108] *Say*: 'This, way that I wayfare upon, which is the way of the affirmation of the Oneness of the Essence, *is my way*, specific to me, upon which is only me alone, *I call to*, the Essence of the [exclusive] unity that is qualified by all of the attributes at the source of the union, *I and whoever follows me*, along this path. And all who call to this way are followers of mine, for the prophets before me all called to the principle and to the final return and to the Essence of the [inclusive] unity that is qualified by some of the attributes, with the exception of Abraham, peace be upon him, for he was the pole (*qutb*)<sup>97</sup> of affirmation of [God's] Oneness. That is why the Prophet [Muḥammad] was a follower of him, when considering the union without differentiation, since there is none who can complete the differentiations of the attributes except him [Muḥammad], blessings and peace be upon him. Otherwise someone other than him would have been the seal of the way of the truth as he was, because no one can call except to that station of perfection which he has reached. *So Glory be to God!*, I [Muḥammad] declare Him to be [exalted] above that anyone other than Him should be upon His way. Nay, He is the wayfarer upon His way and the Caller to His Essence, *and I am not of the idolaters'*, who affirm the other at the station of the affirmation of Essential unity, those who are veiled from Him by [their] I-ness; rather I am annihilated by Him from myself, for He is the One who calls to His way.

[12:109] *And We did not send before you [any messengers] save men inspired by revelation*, that is, individuals in whom some remnant of manliness subsisted, from among the people of the towns of the attributes and the stations, and not from Egypt of the essence, for the subsistence that is actualised for the folk of fixity can only be in the measure in which they are annihilated and have returned to creation and can only be commensurate with the ascension. Complete annihilation and perfect ascension can only be in the case of the pole who possesses the perfect preparedness, who attains every single level, and in whose case must be the complete return that subsumes all of the

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<sup>97</sup> A pole is a friend of God around whom a particular reality of the universe turns. Every pole has two names, servant of Allāh and servant of another of His Names: see Chittick 1989: 371.



differentiations of the attributes upon subsistence: that person is the ‘seal’ (*khātām*), That is why the Prophet said: ‘It is as though the edifice of prophethood has been completed and built with only one brick remaining to be put in place: I am that [final] brick’. It is to this meaning that he alluded in his statement, ‘I was sent to complete the noble character traits (*makārim al-akblāq*)’. **Have they not travelled**, in the land of their preparedness, **and seen the nature of the**, final, **consequence for**, the affair of, **those who were before them**, and the ultimate end of their perfection so that they might attain the full extent of their progress and actualise [the like of] their perfections in accordance with their [individual] preparednesses. For every person there is a specificity and his specific preparedness entails a specific felicity which will be his final sequel, and by acquiring awareness of the specificities of souls and the ultimate ends of their wayfaring there is actualised for the soul from those perfections a unifying configuration which is the perfection of the Muḥammadan community in accordance with their varying preparednesses, and this is the abode of the Hereafter, which is better for those who guard against the attributes of their souls which constitute the veils of [their] preparednesses. **Will you not understand?**, that this station is better than this perishing abode and its enjoyments that you pursue, for, [the Hereafter] *it is indeed the [true] Life, if they only knew* [Q. 29:64].

[12:110] **Until when the messengers despaired**, that is, [until when] they have journeyed and guarded themselves and their conquest and victory over unveilings slackened by the disbelief of the faculties of the soul, until when the messengers, those who are the noble leaders of the people, despaired of attaining perfection, **and thought that**, their suppositions had deceived them in terms of their preparedness for perfection or their hopes, **Our help came to them**, in the way of reinforcement and the granting of success by the replenishing [of them] with the lights of the angelic realm and the realm of invincibility, **and whomever We wished We delivered**, of those messengers and their followers belonging to the folk of [God’s] solicitude. **And**, Our vanquishing by means of veils and chastisement, **cannot be averted from the sinning folk**, when We make manifest upon their hearts the attributes of their souls so that they then cause them [their hearts] to acquire wicked configurations that veil and harm [them].

[12:111] **Verily there is in their stories a crossing over [moral] for people of pith**, that is, [a moral] by which they can cross over from the exoteric aspect of these [stories] to their esoteric one, in the way that We provided a [spiritual] crossing over in the story of Joseph for the possessors of intellects that are stripped of the skin of illusory things, unadulterated with the coverings of sensory things. **It**, this Qur’ān, **is not a discourse that has been fabricated**, by the soul, **but a confirmation of what**, was fixed beforehand

in the Tablet, *and a detailing of everything*, that is undifferentiated in the world of [divine] decree and a guidance to the affirmation of Oneness, *and a mercy*, by means of the self-disclosures of the attributes from behind the curtains of His verses, *for a folk who believe*, in the Unseen by virtue of the purity of their preparedness.

## [13] al-Ra'd

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[13:1] *Alif lām mīm rā'*, that is, the Essence of the [exclusive] unity, and His Name the Knower, and His Greatest Name and the locus of His manifestation which is the complete mercy, according to what has been mentioned. *Those are*, the most exalted tokens of the universal Book which is the nondelimited existence and Its greatest verses, *and that*, meaning, *which has been revealed to you from your Lord*, from the Discriminating Intellect and this that has been mentioned of meanings contained in the letters is the Truth, *but most people do not believe*.

[13:2] *God is He Who raised up the heavens without visible supports*, that is, with supports that cannot be seen, these [supports] being the heavenly souls of their [the heavens'] spiritual angelic realm which keeps them up and moves them, or the heavens of the spirits that have no substratum by which to support them [physically] so that they remain upright by these [spirits], indeed, these [heavens] are disengaged and subsist by themselves; *then presided*, with mastery, *upon the Throne*, by means of [His] effective agency and [His] sustaining, or [He presided] upon the throne of the heart by means of self-disclosure; *and disposed*, the sun of the spirit to the comprehension of the universal gnoses and the seeking of irradiation by the sublime lights, and [He disposed] the moon of the heart to the perception of what is in all the worlds in their entirety and the seeking of replenishment from above and from below then to the reception of the self-disclosures of the attributes by means of unveilings; *each one moving, until [the conclusion of] an appointed time*, that is, [until] a designated purpose, which is that thing's perfection in accordance with the first primordial nature. *He directs the command*, at the beginning by setting up preparednesses and ordering the principles; *He details the signs*, at the end by ordering the perfections and stations that result from wayfaring in accordance with the self-disclosures of the acts and the attributes, *so that you might be certain*, with the eye of certainty, *of the encounter with your Lord*, at the witnessings of the signs of the self-disclosures.

[13:3] *And He it is Who spread out*, the earth of the body, *and set therein the firm mountains*, of the bones, and the rivers of the veins, *and of all*, of the fruits of character traits and perceptibles, *He has made in it a pair, two*, that is, two kinds that are opposites, such as munificence and niggardliness, modesty and shamelessness, licentiousness and chastity, cowardice and valour, injustice and justice and their like, as well as [opposing pairs such as] black and white, sweet and bitter, wholesome and

putrid, heat and cold, smooth and rough and their like. *He covers*, with the night of the darkness of corporeal things the daylight of spiritual things, as in the covering of the spiritual faculties with their instruments and the spirit with the body. *Surely in that are signs for a people who reflect*, on the handiwork of God and the harmonious correspondence between His two worlds, the minor one and the major one.

[13:4] *And on*, the earth of the body, *are tracts neighbouring each other*, such as bone and flesh, fat and nerves, and gardens of the trees of the natural, animal and human faculties, of the vines of the appetitive faculties from which are pressed the wines of the vain desires of the soul, and [gardens] of the [vines of the] rational faculties from which are pressed the wines of love and fervent love, and sown fields that are the vegetative faculties, and the date-palms that are all of the other external and internal senses, *sharing one root*, such as the eyes, the ears, the nostrils, *and not sharing a root*, such as the tongue, and the instrument of reflection, that of estimation and that of memory, *watered by the same [source of] water*, the water of life, *and We make some of them to excel others in*, the flavour of objects of perceptions and natural dispositions, as in the superiority of the intellect's objects of perception over those of the senses, and [the superiority of] eyesight over touch and the natural disposition of wisdom over that of modesty and the like. *Surely in that are signs for a people who understand*, the wonders of His handiwork.

[13:5] *And if you are wondering*, because of their statement, then that [statement of theirs] itself is the cause for wonder, since man becomes a new creation in every minute, indeed, the world [itself] becomes a new creation at every moment by the changing of configurations, states, conditions and forms. How can one who has contemplated the world of engenderment and corruption with a heedful eye deny the [reality of] new creation? *Those are the ones who*, have been veiled from the presential vision of the acts and the self-disclosures of [His] lordliness, and how much more so [are they veiled] from the self-disclosures of the divine attributes? *those — fetters shall be around their necks*, and so they are unable to raise their heads — lowered [as they are] in disgrace towards the earth, their eyes restricted to [perceiving only] what is close to them of [things perceptible to] the senses — in order to see the angelic realm of the spirits and witness the world of [divine] power and the rational concepts that are remote to the waystations of the senses; *and those, they shall be the inhabitants*, of the Fire of the acts in the lowest pit of the abyss of physical nature, *abiding therein*.

[13:6] *And they would have you hasten on the evil rather than the good*, because of the correspondence between their preparedness and evil, this [itself] being on account of the mastery of dark configurations and vices on that [preparedness], and so they incline

to evil because evil prevails over them, *when there have indeed occurred before them*, punishments of the likes of them. *Truly your Lord is forgiving to mankind*, despite their evil-doing towards their own souls when they acquire those wicked configurations that veil [them] from the light, [forgiving] to those in whom such [configurations] have not taken deep roots and have not annulled their preparednesses, and so He removes them with the light of His mercy; *and truly your Lord is severe in retribution*, of those in whom such [wicked configurations] have become deeply rooted and have become a rust, annulling [their] preparedness.

[13:7] *And those who disbelieve say, 'Why has not some sign been sent down upon him from his Lord!'*: having become veiled, they did not see the signs that bore witness to [Muḥammad's] prophethood, such as his [the Prophet's] assumption of God's attributes, because of their non-perception and the blindness of their insights. That is why they did not reckon these as signs and requested them according to their vain desires. Your duty is only to warn them, and not to guide them, for guidance belongs to God; *and for every folk there is a guide*, who corresponds to them in terms of the genus-correspondence of primordial nature and so they acquire an affinity with him at the point of his perfection and his reception of the divine light cast upon him. They accept guidance from him and so God guides them according to His manifestation [in that guide]. Therefore, whoever corresponds to you in terms of that original genus-correspondence will receive guidance from you, and whoever does not, will not.

[13:8] Those are hidden mysteries known only to *God*, who, *knows what every female bears*, and thus He knows what the female of the soul bears in the way of the child of perfection, in other words, the potential of every preparedness, and [knows also] the increase in the wombs of preparedness as a result of self-cleansing, self-purification and the blessed company of perfections, and [He knows] the reduction [in these preparednesses] as a result of engrossment in passionate desires. *And everything*, in the way of perfections, *with Him is according to a*, designated, *measure*, in accordance with [a person's] receptivity. Or [it means]: and everything in the way of the potential for receptivity is with Him according to a measure [designated] in pre-eternity issuing from His holiest effusion, neither increasing or decreasing. Or: for every folk there is a guide, who is God, exalted be He, as He has said *You [Muḥammad] cannot guide whom you like, but [it is] God [who] guides whomever He will* [Q. 28:56], by virtue of the fact that He knows the potential for receptivity that is in [all] preparednesses, the [potential for] increase and decrease [in them] and so He determines on that basis their perfections.

[13:9] *[He is] the Knower*, of the Unseen in the way of the potential for receptivity in preparednesses as well as [Knower] of the witnessed of those perfections present that

emerge into actuality; *the Great*, in stature, whose majesty is above granting the requirements of certain preparednesses, yet He embraces them all and gives them [all] what they require; *the High Exalted*, above that His effusion should be stemmed such that it fails the actualisation of a preparedness and be the cause of it lacking what it requires.

[13:10] *[They are all] the same, those of you who keeps his words secret*, in the hiding-places of his preparedness, *and those who proclaim them openly*, by exteriorising knowledge from [a state of] potentiality to [one of] actuality, *and those who lurk*, in the night that is the darkness of his soul, *and those who go forth*, exiting from the station of the soul and departing to the daylight that is the light of the spirit.

[13:11] *For him are attendants*, reinforcements that follow one another from the angelic realm and arrive to him by the command of God, *guarding him*, from the snatches of the jinn [cf. Q. 37:10] of the imaginal and estimative faculties and the overcomings of the bestial and the predatorial ones and their destruction of him. *Indeed God does not alter the state of a people*, in terms of an outward or inward grace or perfection, *unless they have altered the state of their souls*, in terms of their preparedness and the faculty for reception, as the divine effusion is all-inclusive and contiguous, like flowing water. Have you not considered His statement *watered by the same [source of] water. And We make some of them to excel others in flavour* [Q. 13:4]? Thus that person is coloured by the nature of his preparedness: the one whose preparedness is pure, his effusion will likewise be pure and so his goodness will increase. Similar is the case with outward graces, which inevitably change into scourges merited by some manifest or hidden cause. That is why the verifiers said that the supplication whose response is forthcoming, as alluded to in His words, *Call on Me and I will respond to you* [Q. 40:60], is the one that issues forth by the tongue of preparedness. Moreover, according to one of the pious predecessors (*salaf*), ‘That mouse has eaten into my slippers, and I know that it is only because of some sin I have committed; for otherwise, God would not have sent it against me’, citing the example of the poet’s words:

‘Were I from the [tribe of the great] Māzin, you would not have [dared] deem my camels yours for the slaughtering!’

[13:12] *He it is Who shows you*, the lightning that is the flashes of the holy lights and the divine snatch, *[inspiring] fear*, that is, making you fearful of the speed with which it comes to an end and the long wait for its return, *and hope*, that is, making you hopeful of its remaining fixed or its quick return, *and He produces*, the clouds of the divine peace, *that are heavy*, with the rainwater of certain knowledge and true gnosis.

[13:13] And the thunder that is the assault of the self-disclosures of the Majesty, *proclaims His praise*, in other words, it glorifies Him and sublimates Him above what is conceptualised by the intellect of the one visited by such self-disclosures as he becomes ecstatically conscious of what the intellect is unable to comprehend; and it praises Him as He ought to be praised by means of the perfection that is derived from that self-disclosure, a praising in actuality, so that the glorification of the thunder becomes the cause of that [perfection] itself; or [it is that] the assault glorifies by means of the very same self-disclosure which is exalted above that it should be comprehended by mental perception; *and so too the angels*, that is, the angelic realm of the spiritual faculties, [also proclaim His praise] out of awe of Him and of His Majesty. *He unleashes*, the thunderbolts that are the divine august glories by means of the self-disclosure of the real vanquishing that contains the universal grace and in this way strips the recipient of the self-disclosure of his existence and annihilates him from the remnants of his soul, as reported in the *ḥadīth [qudsī]*: ‘God, exalted be He, has seventy thousand veils of light and darkness. If He were to remove them, the august glories of His countenance would burn up every creature whose eyesight perceived Him’; *and smites with them whom He will*, of His beloved servants and those fervent lovers [of Him] that yearn [for Him]; *yet they dispute about God*, by reflecting on His attributes and by trying to affirm [the truth of] Him through rational consideration and what is incumbent on Him and what is impossible in His case, *though He is great in might*, the One with the power to eliminate [the usefulness of] rational devices for the purposes of comprehension and to obliterate the light of a person’s insight by disclosing Himself and consuming him with the light of fervent love [of Him].

[13:14] *His is the call of truth*: in other words, the truthful call that is not made in falsehood belongs to Him and not to anyone other than Him. He calls on Himself and He responds, as He says [elsewhere] *Surely to God belongs pure religion* [Q. 39:3], which is to say that pure religion is His religion only, which means that the truthful call that deserves to be answered is the call of the affirmer of the Oneness, the one who is annihilated from his soul and subsists through his Lord; likewise is pure religion, His religion. Callers who subsist by their own souls only call upon what they have conceptualised and sculpted in their imagination and so their call is not answered, except in so far as an inanimate thing responds when something is requested from it. By my life, only an affirmer of the Oneness calls upon God, whereas another calls upon the other, an illusory thing that has no power or existence and hence no response. Such [a caller] is one who has veiled his preparedness by the attributes of his soul and thus is not aware of what it [his preparedness] deserved and so his call is lost, and such a call

can only be doomed [to failure]. Or [it is that] the call of truth, Majestic and Exalted, can only be for Him; or that the call of the one called, who is the Truth, is the call specific to His Essence, not made to any of His names or attributes. The describers (*wāṣifūn*) who call upon His names and attributes as opposed to His essence do not receive an answer from the thing that they have called upon except as the answer received by the one who calls upon water by gesturing [to it], [and that is] because they are veiled; *and the call of*, those who are veiled, [*goes only*] *astray*, lost.

[13:15] *And to God prostrates*, [to Him] submits, *whatever is in the heavens and the earth*, of the realities that are the spiritual entities, such as the individual substances and the angelic realm of things, *and also their shadows*, that is, their frames and their bodies, which are the idols that represent those spiritual entities and their shadows, which is why the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, said [the following words] during this prostration:<sup>98</sup> ‘My face, my core and my shadow prostrate to You’, in other words, the reality of my essence, the core of me as an individual and the shadow of my soul, meaning, my existence, me as an entity and me as an individuation [prostrate to You], *willingly or unwillingly*, that is, whether they desire or refuse. The meaning is that they are required to do so necessarily and not that some of them are obedient and others averse; *in the mornings and the evenings*, that is, always.

[13:16] *Say: ‘Then have you taken beside Him*, that is, anything other than Him, whoever it be, *protectors, who have no power to benefit or harm themselves?’*, for the Powerful and the Owner is God and none other.

[13:17] *He sends down*, from the heaven of the Holy Spirit the water of knowledge, *whereat*, the valleys that are the hearts, *flow*, according to the measure of their preparednesses, *and*, the flood of knowledge, *carries a scum*, that is the vileness of the attributes of the earth of the soul together with its vices and baseness, *and from that which they smelt*, in the fire of fervent love in the way of gnoses, unveilings, realities and meanings that cause fervent love to swell, *desiring*, the ornaments of the soul and its joyousness thereby, being perfections for it, *or enjoyment*, in the way of the virtues of character traits that result thereby, since it is the sort of thing in which the soul finds enjoyment, [*there rises*] *a scum the like of it*, a vileness, such as inspecting these [ornaments], seeing them and conceptualising the soul as perfect or excellent decked out in the ornaments of those descriptions, and [vileness] such as its vanity and its

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<sup>98</sup> In other words, when he came to verse Q. 13:15 during a recitation. There are some 14 or 15 instances in the Qur’anic text where the reciter is expected to perform a recitation after reading that verse. In modern editions these instances are indicated by a glyph or a symbol at the end of the relevant verse.



veiledness and all that is reckoned as being among the banes of the soul and the sins of the states. *As for the scum, it passes away as dross*, discarded and annihilated by knowledge, as He has said, *that He may purify you thereby* [Q. 8:11], *while that which is of use to mankind*, of truthful meanings and pure virtues, *lingers*, in the earth of the soul.

[13:18] *For those who respond to their Lord*, by purifying [their] preparedness of the impurities of the attributes of the soul, *there shall be the goodly reward*, which is the perfection that is effused upon them at the moment of purity, expressed by His words, *light upon light* [Q. 24:35], *and those who do not respond to Him*, who have not purified themselves of human vices and the impurities of physical nature, will not be able to offer in redemption anything of what belongs in the lower aspect, such as property and those means to which they were attracted by means of love. They will have thus destroyed their souls because those [means] are the cause of increased distance [from God] and ruin, and so how can they constitute a means for their deliverance from those darknesses? Their declaring themselves innocent of such things will not avail them once the configurations of being attached to these things have become deeply rooted in their souls. *For such there shall be an awful reckoning*, for halting with the acts at the station of the soul, which is the station of divine justice, and so their questioning is inevitable at the Reckoning, *and their abode shall be the Hell-fire*, of the attributes of the soul and the fires of privation and evil configurations;

[13:21] *and who fear their Lord*, upon the self-disclosure of the attributes at the station of the heart and thus witness the majesty of the attribute of Tremendousness, thereby becoming obliged to be in awe and fear;

[13:22] *such as patiently endure*, as they wayfare upon His way, to stay away from familiars, desiring His satisfaction, and such as preoccupy themselves with self-cleansing by means of devotions through [the expending of] wealth and the body, repelling the vice of the soul with virtue; *those, theirs shall be the sequel of the [heavenly] Abode*, as they are returned to the primordial nature. Or [it refers to] those who endure patiently to stay away from the attributes of their souls, desiring the countenance of their Lord, in other words, out of love for the Essence and not out of love for the attributes; and who establish the prayer of the witnessing and expend of the stations, the states, the unveilings and the deeds which We have provided them with, secretly, by disengaging from the configurations of these and the configurations of finding rest with them and love for them, and [expend] openly, by avoiding them and not turning their attention to them, and who, with the good actualised by the self-disclosure of the divine

attribute, repel the evil that is the attribute of the soul: those, theirs shall be the sequel of the [heavenly] Abode, that is, subsistence after annihilation.

[13:23] *Gardens of Eden*, that is, all three of them: they enter the Garden of the Essence along with those that were righteous from among the fathers that are the spirits; and the Garden of the attributes with the hearts; and the Garden of the acts with the righteous from among the spouses of the souls and the descendants that are the faculties; *and the angels*, from among the inhabitants of the realm of divine power and the angelic realm, *shall enter to them from every gate*, of the gates of the attributes, bidding them peace and greeting them with the salutations of luminous irradiations and holy reinforcements, all of which is the result of their patience in staying away from sensory pleasures.

[13:27] *Say: 'Indeed God sends astray whomever He will*: in other words, guidance and error are determined by the signs [sc. the verses of the Qur'ān], for there is a sign in every thing and the signs sent down to the Messenger of God are more than sufficient [for those who want to be guided]; rather what determines these is the divine will, so that He sends astray whomever He will because of a lack of preparedness, or because of that person being veiled by dark coverings; *and He guides to Him those who turn in penitence'*, by purifying their preparedness, from among [His] lovers. Since the folk who are sent astray are of two kinds, those who lack preparedness and those who have veiled theirs by the darkness intrinsic to mortal nature, so the guided folk are also of two types, beloved ones who are guided without their turning [to Him] in penitence (*ināba*), because of the potency of their preparedness, and beloved ones whom God guides after their turning [to Him] in penitence, as He has said *God chooses for Himself whomever He will, and He guides to Himself whomever turns penitently* [Q. 42:13];

[13:28] *those who believe*, that is, those who turn in penitence and who believe with cognitive faith in the Unseen, *and whose hearts are reassured by God's remembrance*, the remembrance of the soul by means of the tongue and by reflecting upon [His] graces; or the remembrance of the heart by reflecting upon the angelic realm and contemplating the attributes of the Beauty and the Majesty. For there are levels of remembrance: the remembrance of the soul by means of the tongue and by reflecting upon [His] graces; the remembrance of the heart by contemplating the attributes; the remembrance of the innermost self by means of communion [with Him]; the remembrance of the spirit by means of witnessing; the hidden remembrance that is the courting at the falling into fervent love [of Him]; and the remembrance of God by being annihilated in Him. The soul is agitated when its attributes and the words of its speech are manifested, and it becomes fickle, and as a result the heart becomes

variegated because of that and changes because of its [the soul's] words. But when God is remembered the soul settles down and the evil whisperings are dissipated, as he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, once said: 'Verily Satan places his snout upon the heart of the son of Adam, but when God is remembered, he slinks away and the heart is reassured'; likewise [is the case with] the remembrance of the heart by means of reflecting on the angelic realm and contemplating the lights of the realm of divine power. As for the remaining [types of] remembrances, these [also] only come about after the reassurance [of the heart] and [the performance of] righteous deeds, in this case self-purification and self-adornment;

[13:29] and, *theirs shall be blessedness*, by arriving at the primordial nature and the perfection of the attributes, *and a fair resort*, by admission into the Garden of the heart, the Garden of the attributes.

[13:33] *Is He Who stands over every soul what it has earned?*, that is, He stands over it [sustaining] it by bringing into existence all that is ascribed to it of things it has earned, being a Sustainer of it and [sustaining it] by means of its earnings. The term 'earned' is used here, even though these [earnings] come about by means of God's creation, exalted be He, because He has manifested these upon it by virtue of a preparedness in it to which He makes these [earnings] correspond and which it receives from God, exalted be He. Thus from the perspective of the reception [of these earnings] by the locus and its fitness to be a locus for the manifestation [of these earnings] and its very being a locus, these [things] are ascribed [to the soul] as things which it has earned, entailing them as it does, while at the same time the Truth, exalted be He, stands over it by bringing them into existence. Or [it means that] He stands over it in accordance with what it earns and with what that [earning] entails. In other words, in the measure that its earnings entail attributes and states which occur to its preparedness, He effuses upon it the [commensurate] recompense that is luminous perfective configurations, that reward it, or tarnished dark configurations that chastise it.

[13:38] *For every term there is a Book:*<sup>99</sup> for every time there is an affair that is prescribed and predetermined or ordained in that moment for creatures. Subsequently, divine precepts are designated by God in accordance with [specific] moments. For every moment there comes from Him a messenger bearing what is good for that [particular] time. Likewise is the case with all things that originate in time, such as signs and otherwise; *and it was not for any messenger to bring*, anything of the sort except by His leave and at the [appointed] time, since these [signs] are designated [certain] times at

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<sup>99</sup> Note that Kāshānī is commenting on the last part of the verse first.

which they come into existence without being changed, substituted, brought forward or delayed.

[13:39] *God effaces whatever He will*, from the Tablets of particulars, which are the heavenly souls, of engravings that are fixed therein, so that these [effaced things] are given non-existence in terms of matter and are annihilated, *and He fixes*, whatever He will therein and brings [these] into existence, *and with Him is the Mother of the Book*, that is, the Tablet of Preceding Decree, which is the Intellect of the All, engraved with everything that has been and that will be, from pre-eternity to sempiternity in a universal way, above being subject to effacing and fixing. The Tablets are four: 1) the Tablet of Preceding Decree that is above being subject to effacing and fixing, which is the Tablet of the First Intellect; 2) the Tablet of Destiny, that is, the Tablet of the universal rational speaking soul wherein are differentiated the universals of the first Tablet and to which causes are attached, and this is the one referred to as the Preserved Tablet; 3) the Tablet of the particular heavenly souls, wherein is engraved all that is in this world in its [given] figure, structure and measure, and this is the one called the Heaven of this world and it is the equivalent of the imagination of the world, just as the first one is the equivalent of its spirit, the second its heart; then comes the Tablet of Primordial Matter that receives form in the world of the witnessing. But God knows best.

[13:41] *Or is it that they have not seen how We visit the land*, We seek out the land of the body at the moment of old age, *diminishing it at its edges?*, by the [gradual] wearing away of its organs, the failure of its faculties and the weakening of its senses bit by bit until death. *And God judges*, in this way; *there is none that can repel His judgement*, none to avert or change His judgement. Or [it means that] We visit the land of the soul at the moment of wayfaring, diminishing it at its edges by annihilating its acts with Our acts first, as He has said, ‘Through Me he hears and through Me he sees’, then, second, by annihilating its attributes with Our attributes, as He has said, ‘[Until] I am his hearing with which he hears and his sight by which he sees’, then by annihilating its essence by Our essence, as He has said *to whom does Sovereignty belong on this day?* [Q. 40:16], responding Himself with His words *To God, the One, the Vanquisher* [Q. 40:16], since creation in its entirety will have been annihilated; thereupon there will be only God’s judgement, judging as He will without any to repel His judgement since anything other than Him does not exist.

## [14] Ibrāhīm

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[14:1] *Alif lām rā'*. *A Book We have revealed to you that you may bring forth mankind,* from the darkness of the multiplicity to the light of the unity; or, from the darkness of the attributes of origination to the light of primordial nature; or, from the darkness of the veils of acts and attributes to the light of essence, *by the leave of their Lord*, by His facilitation in depositing that light in them in the form of preparedness from the Holiest Effusion drawn from the World of the Divinity, and by His granting of success in preparing the means of its emergence into actuality from the Presence of the Lordliness. For His leave is the gift of preparedness and the preparation of the means: otherwise there would be no one to bring them out; *to the path of the Mighty*, the Strong who vanquishes the darkness of the multiplicity with the light of His unity, *the One who is Praised*, for the perfection of His Essence. According to the second meaning: the path of the Mighty who vanquishes the attributes of the soul by the light of the heart, the Praised one who bestows the graces of virtues and forms of knowledge when the primordial nature is pure. According to the third: the Mighty who by the august glories of His essence vanquishes the lights of His attributes and annihilates by the Reality of His He-ness all of His creatures, the Praised one who bestows the subsisting existence that is perfect, after the annihilation of vices and the one that is deficient by the existence of His essence and the beauty of His countenance.

[14:2] *And woe to the disbelievers*, those who are veiled from the unity, or primordial nature, or the self-disclosure of the Essence and His unveiling. The levels of chastisement are dependent on [one of] these three aspects. Thus it is either the chastisement of the love of rivals [set up for God] in the Hell-fire of contrareity; the chastisement of configurations of vices and the fires of the attributes of the soul and the entailments of natures; or the chastisement of the veils of the acts and the attributes and privation from the light of the Essence;

[14:3] *those who prefer the*, sensory, *life of this world*, over the rational one and the formal one over the spiritual one, by virtue of His description of being astray as being remote and by virtue of the fact that the world of the senses is the most distant of the levels from God, exalted be He.

[14:4] *And We have not sent any Messenger except with the tongue of his people*, that is, with speech that corresponds with the state in which they are in, in accordance with their preparedness and commensurate with their intellects. For otherwise they would not understand, as that meaning would then be remote from their understanding and would not correspond with their station; and he would not be able to make clear for them the potential in their first preparedness in the way of perfection that befits it and

what their ipseities entail according to primordial nature; *God then sends astray whomever He will*, because of the disappearance of that person's preparedness through dark configurations that have taken deep root [in him] and false beliefs that have settled [in him]; *and He guides whomever He will*, whomever has remained upon his preparedness, or in whom the veils of his configurations and the forms of his beliefs have not taken deep root; *and He is the Mighty*, the Strong whose will cannot be overcome and so He guides whomever He wishes to send astray and sends astray whomever He wishes to be guided; *the Wise*, who manages the affair of guiding the one to be guided by all manner of graces and the affair of the sending astray of the one to be sent astray by all manner of forsaking, as required by [His] ultimate wisdom.

[14:5] *Surely in that are signs for every man enduring, grateful*, that is, for every believer with faith in the Unseen, since endurance and gratefulness are two stations for the wayfarer that precede arrival, right after the compact of faith and the journeying in the acts in order to actualise the level of trust [in God]: at that point His signs he [the wayfarer] heeds and draws on, and which he holds on to and supports himself on during his wayfaring, [these] constitute the acts. And so everytime he sees a grace or hears of one or one reaches him, such as guidance or otherwise, he gives thanks with the tongue and with the heart by conceptualising that [grace] as being from God, and [thanks] with the limbs by means of [his] virtuous reception and acceptance [of that grace] as well as obedience and conduct in accordance with the requirements of that [grace] in the way necessary. And everytime he sees an affliction or hears of one or one befalls him, he endures patiently by guarding his tongue from anxious fear and by saying: *surely we belong to God and to Him we will return* [Q. 2:156]; and by fortifying the heart [with patience] and conceptualising that in that [affliction] there is good and welfare for him, for otherwise God would not have tried him with that, and by preventing the limbs from restlessness.

[14:10] *'Can there be doubt concerning God*, despite the obviousness of Him? In other words, how can you doubt that to which we [the messengers] are calling you to when there is no room for doubt concerning Him on account of the extent of His manifestness? Rather it is that it is necessary to clarify that which clarifies Him. *He calls you so that He might forgive you your sins*, so that He might shield by His light the darkness of the veils of your attributes so that you do not have any doubt concerning Him at the disclosure of certainty, *and defer you to*, a felicitous end entailed by your preparedness, since every individual has designated for him, in accordance with his first preparedness, a perfection which constitutes his spiritual term. Likewise for every person, in accordance with his first constitution, there is an end to his life that

constitutes his natural term. And just as interfering terms severe life before arrival at that appointed end because of some particular cause, likewise calamities and impediments, which are the veils of preparedness, prevent a person from arriving at that designated perfection.

[14:21] *And they sally forth to God all together*: there are three sallies for creatures.<sup>1</sup> A sallying forth at the minor resurrection upon the death of the body; the sallying forth of every person from the veil of his body onto the open space of the Reckoning and the Recompense; and a sallying forth at the middle resurrection upon voluntary death to the veil of the attributes of the soul and the sallying forth to the open space of the heart at the return to primordial nature; and a sallying forth at the major resurrection upon pure annihilation from the veil of the ego to the space of the real unity, which is the sallying forth referred to in His saying *and they sally forth to God, the One, the Vanquisher* [Q. 14:48]. Those who belong to this [latter] resurrection, He will see them exteriorised (*burūz*), nothing of them being hidden to God. As for the manifestation of this resurrection for all and the exteriorisation of all before God and the incidence of the speech between the weak and the arrogant, that will be with the presence of the Messiah (*mahdī*), the one who subsists by [upholding] justice, the one who will discriminate between the inhabitants of the Garden and those of the Fire at the conclusion of the divine affair with the deliverance of the fortunate and the sending of the wretched to perdition.

[14:22] *And Satan says*: the authority of the Truth triumphs over the Satan of illusion, whos is illumined by His light and so submits and complies, and becomes truthful, knowing that the definitive argument [truly] belongs to God in His calling of creation to the Truth and [belongs] not to him [Satan]; and his [Satan's] call to falsehood by seducing [them] with what is evanescent and adorning for them the life of this world is groundless and devoid of proof. So he [Satan] affirms that His promise, exalted be He, of subsistence after the decay of the body, and of reward and punishment at the sending forth [at the Resurrection] is [a promise of] truth which has been fulfilled; whereas my [Satan's] promise that there is only the life of this world is falsehood, which I invented, and those who deserve to be blamed are only those who accepted the call that was devoid of proof and responded to it and turned away from the call that was accompanied by evidence and did not respond to it: *so do not blame me, but blame yourselves*.

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<sup>1</sup> In keeping with the exigencies of the English translation of the Qurʾān, the expression ‘sallying forth’ has been retained in the commentary in order to maintain the connection with the scriptural narrative. The term *burūz*, however, is a technical term denoting ‘projection’ or ‘exteriorisation’ of creatures, which properly refers to the unfolding of the divine essence in creation.

[14:24] *a goodly word*, that is, a goodly soul, as has already been mentioned in the naming of Jesus, peace be upon him, as ‘a word’ [from God] [cf. Q. 3:45], *is as a goodly tree*, likened by Him to an olive tree in the Qur’ān and a date-palm in the *ḥadīth*; *its root set firm*, through reassuredness and the firmness of conviction through proof, *and its shoots are in*, the heaven of the spirit;

[14:25] *it gives its produce*, of the fruits of gnoses, wisdoms and realities [at], *every*, moment, *by the leave of its Lord*, by His facilitating and expediting [of that] by the successful bringing together and setting up of the means.

[14:26] *And the similitude of a bad*, soul, *is as a bad tree*, like colocynth or solanaceae, *uprooted from upon the earth*, deracinated because of its inconstancy, perturbed belief and lack of stability regarding anything.

[14:27] *God confirms those who believe*, with the faith of certainty by a real proof, *in the*, sensory, *life*, for their uprightness with regard to the divine law and for their wayfaring along the path of virtue and justice as they [seek to] secure livelihood, *and in the Hereafter*, in other words, [and in] the spiritual life, for their being guided by the light of the Truth in following the [Sufi] path, and for following an insight from God and a clear proof from their Lord as they [seek to] actualise gnoses; *and God sends astray the evildoers*, in both lives, because of the diminishing of their preparedness by the shares of the soul’s attributes and their subsisting in bewilderment because of being veiled from the light of the Truth.

[14:28] [*Have you not seen those*] *who exchanged God’s grace*, which He bestowed upon them from pre-eternity in terms of original guidance and the light of preparedness which is the merchandise of salvation, *for unthankfulness*, that is, [in return] for veiledness and misguidance, as He has said, *those are they who have bought error for guidance; so their commerce has not profited them, nor are they guided* [Q. 2:16], having forfeited the subsisting light and exchanged it for transient sensory pleasure, remaining thus in everlasting darkness; *and who caused their people*, those of the faculties of their souls or those who follow their ways, emulate their example and imitate them in that, *to take up residence in the Abode of Ruin?*

[14:30] *And they have set up rivals to God*, in the way of the enjoyments of this world, its wholesome and appetising things, loving these as they love God, since anything the love of which overwhelms becomes an object of worship. God, exalted be He, has said, *Beautiful for mankind is love of lusts — of women, children* to the end [of the verse Q. 3:14], *that they might lead [others] astray from His way*, all those who look to them from among the juveniles who are prepared and those who follow their religion. *Say:*



*'Enjoy!*, go the whole way with that [error of yours] by the command of illusion, for your enjoyment shall be shortlived, quick to disappear, imminently evanescent and its consequence an evil one by ending up in the Fire.

[14:32] *God it is Who created*, the heavens of the spirits and the earth of the body, *and He sends down from*, the heaven of the world of the Holy the water of knowledge, *and with it He brings forth*, from the earth of the soul, the fruits of wisdoms and virtues, *as sustenance for you*, and fortification for the heart. *And He has disposed for you*, rivers of knowledge by means of reasoning, inference, derivation and differentiation.

[14:33] *And He has disposed for you*, the sun of the spirit and the moon of the heart, *constant*, in journeying through unveilings and witnessings, *and He has disposed for you*, the night that is the darkness of the soul's attributes and the day that is the light of the spirit in order to seek livelihood and [means to] the final return, as well as rest and illumination.

[14:34] *And He gives you of all that you ask of Him*, by the tongues of your preparednesses, for every thing that asks of Him perfection by the tongue of its preparedness, He effuses upon it at the request without delay or languor, as He has said, *All that is in the heavens and the earth implore Him. Every day He is upon some matter* [Q. 55:29]. *And if you were to enumerate God's grace*, of those matters that precede your existence, effused from the Divine Presence, and of those [matters] that come to you in the way of the reinforcement of [spiritual] nurturing that arrives [to you] from the Lordly Presence, *you could never number it*, because of its endlessness, as affirmed by [His] wisdom. *Lo! man is verily a wrong-doer*, by placing the light of preparedness and the substratum of subsistence in the darkness of nature and the locus of annihilation and expending that [light] therein, or by diminishing what is due to God or what is due to his own soul by annulling his preparedness, *and unthankful*, for those graces, which cannot be enumerated, by using them for what they should not be used, and [unthankful] by being heedless of the One bestowing these graces on him and veiling himself from Him with these [graces].

[14:35] *And when Abraham*, of the spirit, *said*, by the tongue of [his] state upon orienting himself to God and seeking presential vision: *'My Lord, make this land*, that is, the land of the body, *secure*, from the overcomings of the attributes of the soul, the mutual conflict of the faculties and the mutual attraction of vain desires, *and turn me and my sons*, the rational faculties, both the considerative and the practical, reflection, intuition, remembrance and others, *away from serving*, the idols of multiplicity, away from sensory lusts, corporeal desires, the familiars of nature through love.

[14:36] *My Lord, truly they have led astray many of mankind*, by causing them to be attached to these, being attracted to them and being veiled by them from the unity. *So whoever follows me*, in the wayfaring along the path of the affirmation of the Oneness, *verily belongs with me, and whoever disobeys me, truly You are Forgiving*, concealing for him that dark configuration by Your light, *Merciful*, to him by effusing upon him perfection after forgiveness.

[14:37] *Our Lord, indeed I have made some of*, the seed of my faculties, *to dwell in a valley where there is no sown land*, that is to say, the valley of corporeal nature that is devoid of the sown land of perception, knowledge, gnosis and virtue, *by Your Sacred House*, which is the heart, *our Lord, that they may establish*, the prayer of communion and unveiling. *So make some of the hearts*, of the men of the senses, *yearn towards them*, so that they are provisioned with all types of sensations, reinforced with the capacity to perceive particulars and take their side to avoid contravention by inclining to the lower aspect and to corporeal pleasures. *And provide them*, with the fruits of gnosés and realities of universals, *that they might be thankful*, for Your grace and thus use those perceptions to seek perfection.

[14:38] *Our Lord, You know what we hide*, of what is in us in potential, *and what we proclaim*, of what we have projected into actuality of perfections. *And nothing is hidden from God*, in the earth of preparedness or in the heaven of the spirit.

[14:39] *Praise be to God Who has given me*, at the advanced age of perfection, *Ismael*, the considerative rational faculty, *and Isaac*, the cognitive one. *Lo! my Lord is indeed the Hearer of supplication*, that is, [He is indeed] the Hearer of the supplication of the preparedness, as one [of them] said, ‘Suffice it as my supplication [of Him] that He should have knowledge of my state’.

[14:40] *My Lord, make me an establisher*, of the prayer of presential vision, *and [also] of my seed*, each one of them an establisher of a prayer specific to him. *Our Lord! And accept my supplication*, that is, my request for complete annihilation in You.

[14:41] *Our Lord, forgive me*, with the light of Your essence the sin of my existence so that I might not become veiled in insolence, *and my parents*, and the causes of my existence in the way of recipient entities and agents, such that I do not see anything other than You and that I might not turn my attention to anything besides You, lest I be afflicted with deviating vision, and [forgive also] the believers of the spiritual faculties, *on the day when*, the reckoning of luminous spiritual configurations and ego-centric dark ones — depending on which is the preponderant — *shall come to pass’*.

[14:48] *The day when the earth will be changed to other than the earth*: the earth of nature is changed to the earth of the soul upon the arrival at the station of the heart and the heaven of the heart [is changed] to the heaven of the mystery. Similarly, the earth of the soul is changed to the earth of the heart and the heaven of the mystery to the heaven of the spirit. Likewise is the case with every station which the wayfarer crosses: what is above it and what is below is changed, as with the changing of the heaven of trust, in the affirmation of the unity of the acts, to the heaven of satisfaction in the affirmation of the unity of the attributes, then the heaven of satisfaction to the heaven of the affirmation of Oneness upon the unveiling of the Essence, whereafter all is ‘rolled up’<sup>2</sup> *and they (people) sally forth to God, the One*, other than Whom there is no existent, *the Vanquisher*, by Whose self-disclosure all that is other than Him is annihilated.

[14:49] *And you shall see the sinners*, those veiled by the attributes of the souls and the configurations of vices, *coupled*, in their places in the Sijjīn [cf. Q. 83:7-8] of nature and the Abyss [cf. Q. 101:9] of the vain desire of the soul in the chains that are the attachments to natural things and the halters that are the love of lowly things;

[14:50] *their shirts [made] of pitch*, by virtue of the mastery acquired [over them] by the blackness of dark configurations from the attachments to substances that cast their darkness on them, *and their faces are engulfed*, by the fire of being vanquished, humiliated and veiled from the pleasure of perfection. Therein lies another mystery which is only unveiled to the folk of the resurrection, those who have witnessed the sending forth and the rising. But God knows best.

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<sup>2</sup> Cf. Q. 21:104 *The day when We shall roll up the heaven as the Scribe rolls up the written scroll. As We began the first creation, We shall repeat it — a promise binding on Us. Truly We shall do [that].*

[15] al-Ḥijr

*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[15:1] *and of a manifest Qur'ān*, that is, [a Qur'ān] that is comprehensive and manifesting of all things.

[15:16] *And verily We have placed*, in the heaven of the intellect, *constellations*, stations and levels such as the intellect of primordial material, intellect by natural disposition, intellect in actuality and the acquired intellect (*mustafād*), *and We have adorned it*, with forms of knowledge and gnoses, *for beholders*, those who reflect upon Him;

[15:17] *and We have guarded them from every outcast devil*, from false illusions,

[15:18] *except the one who listens by stealth*, and snatches rational judgement by listening stealthily because of his proximity to the horizon of the intellect — *he is pursued by a clear flame*, that is, a clear proof, and so We banish him and annul his judgement.

[15:19] And the earth of the soul, *We have stretched it out*, We have laid it out with the light that comes from the heart, *and cast therein firm mountains*, the virtues, *and caused to grow therein every kind of*, character perfections, voluntary acts, virtuous natural dispositions and sensory perceptibles [that is a], *balanced thing*, designated and determined according to a rational measure that is just and does not incline to either of the two sides of immoderation or excess, for each faculty according to [what] it [is].

[15:20] *And We have made for you therein [means of] livelihood*, by means of the regulations of particulars and corporeal deeds, *and those for whom you do not provide*, of those attributed to you and attached to you. Or [it is] that We have placed in the heaven of the heart constellations that are the stations, such as patience, gratitude, trust, satisfaction, gnosis, love and adorned these with gnoses, wisdoms and realities and guarded them from every outcast devil of illusions and imaginations, except for the one who listens by stealth and is then pursued by a clear flame, that is, a luminous radiation from the risings of the lights of guidance.

[15:21] *And there is not a thing but that the stores thereof are with Us*: that is to say, there is not a thing in [all of] existence but that with Us there is a store for it in the world of decree, first by its form becoming delineated in the Mother Book, which is the Universal Intellect, in a universal way; then [there is] another store in the world of the universal soul, which is the Preserved Tablet, by its form becoming delineated therein as being dependent on its causes; then [there is yet] another store, nay, stores in the particular heavenly souls expressed in [the concept of] the heaven of this world (*samā' al-dunyā*) and the Tablet of Destiny (*lawḥ al-qadar*) by the form of that [thing] becoming delineated therein as a particular, determined according to its measure, shape and situation; *and We do not send it down*, in the world of the witnessing, *except in a*

*known measure*, in terms of shape, quantity and situation, as well as a time and locus that is designated and a preparedness that is specific to that [thing] at that moment.

[15:22] *And We send*, the winds of the fragrant divine gusts, *to fertilise*, with wisdoms and gnoses, to purify the heart and to prepared the preparednesses for the reception of the self-disclosures, *and send down*, out of the heaven of the spirit the water of the forms of true knowledge, *so that We give it to you to drink*, and gave you life therewith, *for you are not the storers*, of that knowledge, being devoid of it as you are.

[15:23] *Indeed it is We Who give life*, by means of real life through the water of the life of knowledge and making you reside in the station of primordial nature, *and bring death*, by annihilating [you] in the unity, *and We are the inheritors*, of existence, who will subsist after your annihilation.

[15:24] *And verily We know the advanced among you*, that is, those who perceive and yearn from among the lovers [of God] who seek to advance, *and verily We know those behind*, attracted to the world of sense and the source of abomination as a result of the mastery of the attributes of the soul and the love of the body and its pleasures, those who seek to lag behind away from the world of the holy.

[15:25] *And it is indeed your Lord Who will gather them*, together with the one whom they take as friend and [it is He] Who will bring them together with the one whom they love and incline towards in desire; *lo! He is the Wise*, [One] who manages their affair at the gathering in accordance with [the exigencies of] wisdom and depending on [the nature of] correspondence [between them], *the Knower*, of all that is in them of hidden inclinations, attraction and love and what their configurations and attributes entail and thus recompense them for their descriptions.

[15:26] *And verily We created man out of a dry [clinking] clay of malleable mud*, that is, out of the four admixed elements, since *ḥama'* is mud that changes and *masnūn* is that [mud] on which water is poured until it is rid of hard or rough particles that are intemperate and are resistant to the acceptance of the form that is to be conceptualised from it; *al-ṣalṣāl* is that [clay] which is penetrated by air and becomes dry by heating.

[15:27] *And the jānn*, that is, the origin of the jinn, which is the substance of the animal spirit from which are generated the faculties of estimation and imagination as well as others; *We created beforehand out of the permeative fire*, that is to say, from natural heat and the vaporousness and subtlety of mixtures that are transformed thereby. He says 'beforehand' because the effect of heat on composition by means of admixture and tempering comes beforehand and the effect of that vapour on the form of the organs, nay, on the active effective faculties comes before the composition in the

first place. As for the signification of the angels' compliance and Iblīs's non-compliance, that has already been mentioned.

[15:34] *'Then be gone*, from the Garden of the world of the holy that rises to His horizon, *for you are indeed*, accursed and banished therefrom since you are not disengaged from substratum.

[15:35] *And indeed*, the curse of remoteness in terms of level, *shall rest upon you until the Day*, of the minor resurrection and the disengagement of the soul from the body by the severing of its attachment [to it], or [until the Day] of the major one upon annihilation in the affirmation of Oneness.

[15:39] *I shall adorn for them*, passionate desires and pleasures in the lower aspect, *and I shall lead them astray, all of them*;

[15:40] *except those servants of Yours*, that is, [except] those who are specific to You those whom You have rid of the blemishes of the attributes of the soul and whom You have purified of the filth of attachment to nature and caused to be disengaged, by [their] becoming oriented towards You, from the remnants of their attributes and essences; or those whom You have devoted their deeds sincerely to You without their being any share [in those deeds] for any other than You.

[15:41] *'This is a path*, obligatory, *for Me*, to establish and take care of, *that is straight*, without crookedness, and it is that you shall have no warrant over those saved servants of Mine, except those who correspond to you in terms of deviation and remoteness from My path and follow you.

[15:44] *It [Hell] has seven gates*, which are the five senses and lust and wrath — *to each gate belongs an appointed portion of them*, an organ specific to that [gate], or certain creatures who shall specifically enter through that [gate] because of their being overcome by the faculty of that gate.

[15:45] *Truly the God-fearing*, who have cleansed themselves of the coverings of nature and disengaged from the attributes of humanity, *shall be amidst gardens*, of the meadows of the world of the holy, *and springs*', of the water of the life of knowledge, to whom it is said:

[15:46] *'Enter these*, safe from the configurations of physical bodies and the diseases of the heart that prevent the arrival to this station, *secure!*, from the defects of the world of contrareity, the accidents of engendered existence (*kawn*), corruption, the changes of the states of times and substrata.

[15:47] *And We remove whatever rancour*, that is, [whatever] firmly rooted malice or configuration that rises from the soul towards the aspect of the heart that is adjacent to it [that], *may be in their breasts*, by effusing light and the mastery of the faculty of the spirit and the reinforcement of the holy. Those are the ones whose darknesses have been overcome by their lights from among the folk of knowledge and certainty, and from whom, consequently, have been eliminated dark ego-centric configurations and the effects of enmity that are the concomitants of the falling down of the soul and its inclining to the world of contrareity, and in whom has radiated the faculty of primordial love by the mirroring of the holy rays and the lights of the affirmation of Oneness and certainty of some of them with [those of the] others such that they become brethren by virtue of the compact of faith and spiritual correspondence between them, *upon couches*, high levels, *facing one another*, because their degrees are the same, their levels near to one another and [because] they are not veiled.

[15:48] *No toil will touch them*, because of the impossibility of there being [present] the causes of incompatibility and contrareity, *nor will they be expelled from thence*, because of the everlasting nature of their station and its transcending time and its vicissitudes. As for the modality of the angels' descent upon prophets and the embodiment of disengaged individuals, who are detached from corporeal configurations and who are holy, by the high spirits, that has been alluded to in *sūrat Hūd*.

[15:87] *And verily We have given you seven*, that is to say, the seven attributes which are confirmed for God, exalted be He, and which are: life, knowledge, power, will, hearing, vision and speech, *of the oft-repeated [verses]*, whose confirmation has been repeated and reiterated for you, first at the station of the heart's presence upon your assumption of His character traits and His descriptions, such that they are yours; and second, at the station of subsistence by means of existence bestowed by the Truth after annihilation in the affirmation of Oneness, *and the great Qur'ān*, that is, the all-comprehensive Essence that combines all of the attributes. Seven were given to Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him, and nine to Moses, because he [the latter] was not given the great Qur'ān, but his station was that of being spoken to, that is, the station of the unveiling of the attributes to the exclusion of the unveiling of the Essence and thus his were the seven together with the heart and the spirit.

[15:98] *So glorify [Him]*, by disengaging from the accidents of the attributes that are attached to substrata so that you might be an exalter of God, exalted be He, by the tongue of [your] state, praising of your Lord by assuming the attributes of perfection so that you might be a praiser of the graces of the self-disclosure of His attributes through

your descriptions, *and be of those who prostrate themselves*, the prostration of annihilation in His Essence,

[15:99] *and worship your Lord*, through the glorifications, praises and prostrations mentioned, *until*, the truth of, *Certainty comes to you*, and your worship comes to an end with the termination of your existence and He becomes both the Worshipper and the Worshipped One, there being none other than Him.



## [16] al-Nahl

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[16:1] *God's commandment has come*: since the Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, was from among the folk of the major resurrection witnessing it and witnessing its states at the source of the union — as [indicated by what] he has said, 'I have been sent with the Hour [following me] as [in the distance between] these two [fingers]<sup>1</sup> — he informed of his presential vision by saying *God's commandment has come*. And since its manifestation in differentiated mode, such that it will be manifest to every single person, will only occur with the coming of the Messiah (*Mahdī*), peace be upon him, he said: *so do not seek to hasten it*, as this was not yet the time for its manifestation. He then confirmed his presential vision of God's countenance and the annihilation of creation in the Resurrection with his words: *Glory be to Him and exalted be He above what they associate*, [with Him] in the way of affirming the existence of another. He [God] then differentiated what he [Muḥammad] had witnessed at the source of the union — since he was at the station of separation after concentration, witnessing the multiplicity of the attributes at the source of the [exclusive] unity of the Essence where he is neither veiled from the multiplicity by the unity nor vice versa, as mentioned in His words *God bears witness ...* [Q. 3:18] — and so He said:

[16:2] *He sends down the angels with the Spirit*, that is to say, the knowledge with which He revives hearts, meaning [by that knowledge], the Qur'ān, *from*, the world of, *His command*, wherein it was inscribed, *to whomever He will of His servants*, those singled out for extra solicitude from Him [saying]: Inform them of the affirmation of Oneness and fear of God. And so after the explication of the [exclusive] unity of the Essence, He elucidates the world of the real attributes by sending down the spirit, which is knowledge, and affirming the [divine] will, which is the [divine] volition, and [He elucidates] the world of the Names by affirming the angels, and the world of the acts by [sending His] warning. He then enumerates the relative attributes, such as those pertaining to creation and provision, and differentiates the various graces such as blessings and others. Once the Truth and the creation are manifest, then the path[s] of truth and [that of] falsehood become manifest and so He says:

[16:9] *And God's is the direction of the way*: that is, adherence to the straight way and guidance to it of those who are His folk falls on Him, as he [Hūd] said *surely my Lord is*

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<sup>1</sup> The Prophet is said to have indicated this with his first and middle finger, the small difference in length being the small period of time left between his mission and the Resurrection.

*on a straight path* [Q. 11:56]. In other words, all who are on this path, which is the path of the affirmation of Oneness, are undoubtedly His folk, exalted be He, since that is His path, the one to which He adheres; *and some of these, paths, are deviant*, in other words, some paths, which are those separate paths, to the exclusion of the path of the affirmation of Oneness, are deviant, swerving from the truth and inevitably leading to falsehood: that is the path of error, whichever one it may be. He did not will that all be guided to the straight path because that would contradict the [divine] wisdom;

[16:28] *those whom the angels take [in death] while they are wronging their souls*?. It has already been mentioned that the foremost affirmers of the Oneness are received [in death] by God, exalted be He, through His Essence, whereas the pious and the felicitous divide into two groups: as for those have risen from the station of the soul by disengaging and have arrived at the station of the heart by means of knowledge and virtues, they are received [in death] by the Angel of Death. As for those who are at the station of the soul from among the righteous, the pious renouncers and the followers of the law who have not disengaged from the attachments of the body by means of self-cleansing and adornment, they are received [in death] by the Angels of Mercy who give them the good tidings of the Garden, that is, the Garden of the soul which is the Garden of the acts and the effects. As for the evil ones, the wretched, they are received [in death] however they may be by the Angels of Retribution. For the angelic faculties that are conjoined to souls taken on the configurations of those souls. Thus if these [souls] are veiled and dark, then their configurations will be dark, shadowy and horrible, and so the angelic faculties that seize their souls will take on those configurations by correspondence. That is why it is said that the Angel of Death appears in the form of the character traits of the dying person: if these are vile and dark, then his [the Angel's] form will be dreadful and eerie. Fear and terror will overcome the one whom he [the Angel] is visiting and that [dying] person will submit meekly and relinquish his arrogance and will manifest incapacity and meekness. That is the significance of His words: *Then they will offer submission*, in other words, they will seek peace, pathetic, yielding and abandoning obduracy and rebelliousness and they will say: *'We were not doing any evil'*, and they will receive the response of their [the angels'] words: *'Nay! Surely God is Knower of what you used to do'*.

[16:29] *So enter the gates of Hell-fire*, of the acts. As for those who guard against acts of disobedience and things that are forbidden, those who halt at [the bounds delimited by] the stipulations of the Law, who acknowledge the affirmation of Oneness and the prophethood by way of imitation, but not by way of verification — for otherwise they would disengage from the attributes of the soul to the station of the heart by means of

the knowledge of certainty — those they will be received [in death] by the angels while they are goodly [souls] in the form of their character traits and their beautiful goodly deeds, rejoicing and anticipating good tidings,

[16:32] [with the angels] *saying: ‘Peace be on you!; Enter the Garden*, that is, the Garden they are familiar with, which is the Garden of the souls from among the Gardens of the acts, *because of what you used to do’*.

[16:35] *And the idolaters say, ‘Had God willed we would not have worshipped anything besides Him*: they only say this out of obduracy and sinful disobedience in excessive ignorance and in order to force [the argument upon] the affirmers of Oneness on the basis of their beliefs. For had they said that out of knowledge or certainty, they would have been affirmers of the Oneness [too] and not idolaters by their attribution of will and effect to another. Because the one who knows that nothing can happen without the will of God, will [also] know that if every person in the entire world were to will something which God does not will that thing will not happen; and that person will acknowledge [His Oneness] by denying power and will to all that is other than God, exalted be He. Then he would no longer be an idolater: God, exalted be He, says *Had God willed, they would not have been idolaters* [Q. 6:107] — *So did those before them*, [do the same] by denying the messengers out of obstinacy.

[16:40] *All that We say to a thing, when We will it, is to say to it ‘Be’, and it is*: the difference between God’s will, exalted be He, and His knowledge and power can only be one of conceptual consideration (*i’tibāran*) For God, exalted be He, knows every thing and knows that it will come to pass at a designated time by a designated cause in a designated manner. If we were to consider His knowledge of such [aspects], we would say that that is [taking place] by His being the Knower; if we were to consider His specification of a designated time and designated manner, we would say that it is by His will; and if we were to consider the necessity of His existence in relation to the existence of that whose existence is dependent on Him at that time and in that known manner, we would say that it is by His power. Thus all three refer back to [His] knowledge. Were our knowledge to entail the existence of a thing and were it not to change or require thought or resolve, except that it be a thing known, or [require] the movement of [our] instruments, it would be the same case with us.

[16:48] *Or have they not observed what God has created of things*, such as a created essence or reality, whatever created essence it may be, *how their shadows incline*, that is, [how] their frames and forms are embodied and imaginalised — for every thing has a reality which constitutes that thing’s origin in the [dominion of the] angelic realm (*malakūt*) and which gives it its ipseity, as God, exalted be He, has said *in Whose hand is*

*the dominion (malakūt) of all things* [Q. 36:83]; and [every thing has] a shadow which constitutes its attribute and its locus of manifestation, that is, its body by which that thing becomes manifest, *to the right and to the left*, that is, to the orientation of good and that of evil, *prostrating to God*, obedient to His command, fully compliant, not refusing what He wants from it. In other words, [have they not observed things] the frames of which move towards the orientations of good acts and evil ones by His command, *and [how] they are subject*, abased and humbled before His command, [totally] subjugated?

[16:49] *And to God prostrates*, [to Him] are obedient, *whatever is in the heavens*, in the world of spirits in the way of the inhabitants of the realm of invincibility and [those of] the angelic realm and [of] the disengaged holy spirits, *and whatever is on the earth*, in the world of bodies in the way of legged animals, humans, trees, and the entirety of earthly and heavenly souls and faculties, *and they are not arrogant*: they do not refrain from being obedient and humbled before His command.

[16:50] *They fear their Lord*, that is, they are broken, effected and acted upon by Him in the way that a fearful person is acted upon [by the thing that causes in him fear], *from above them*, from His subjugation, influence and exaltedness over them, *and they do what they are commanded*, in obedience and compliance in such a way that they are unable to do anything else.

[16:54] [*Then when He has rid you of the misfortune*] *behold, a group of you attribute partners to their Lord*, by ascribing grace to other than Him and seeing that [grace as coming] from that [other]; likewise [they attribute partners to Him] by ascribing harm to another and referring the sin of that to that [other] and seeking the help of that [other] in removing it. God, exalted be He, said: ‘I, the jinn and humanity constitute an awesome tiding: I create, yet other than Me is worshipped and I provide, yet other than Me is thanked’. That is [true] ingratitude for [His] graces and obliviousness to the Gracious one, both of which are alluded to in His statement:

[16:55] *in order to deny that which We have given them. So enjoy, for soon you shall know*, the evil consequence of that belief for them. Or [it is that]: you shall know at the manifestation of [His] unity that nothing other than God has the power of effect over anything.

[16:56] *And they assign, to what they do not know*, existence of what is besides Him, *a portion of that which We have provided them with*, and so they say: ‘That one gave me such and such’, and ‘were that one not to give me [that thing] it would have been thus’, or ‘a particular individual provided me [with this] and helped be’, in effect, assigning to

others the power of effect with regard to that thing reaching him. Even if they were not to affirm an effective agency for that [individual] with regard to the coming into existence of that [thing], they would [nevertheless] assign him a portion of what God had provided them.

[16:75] *God strikes a similitude*: for the disengaged one and the confined one, the idolater and the affirmer, *a slave who is a chattel*, lover of other than God, preferring him with his desire, for the one who is confined to something follows its religion and issues forth on the basis of its judgement and behaves according to its command and is thus its slave, since every person who loves something will obey it and if he obeys it he worships it. And so among them is he who worships Satan and another who worships passionate desire, while there is one who worships this world, or the dinar, or garments, as he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him: ‘Wretched is the worshipper of the dinar. Wretched is the worshipper of the dirham. And wretched is the worshipper of the embroidered wool garment’. God, exalted be He, says *Have you then seen him who has taken as his god his [own] vain desire?* [Q. 45:23]; and if he were to worship that he would become its chattel and its bondman, *having no power over anything*, because the lover [of something] or the worshipper, his aspiration, his influence and the faculty of his soul does not rise above the object of his love or worship, for otherwise he would not be subjugated by that [thing] and captive in its fetters; nay he is diminished by [his worship of] that, while his very object of worship is powerless and possesses no effect, not even existence whether it be inanimate or animate, a human or whatever you like. Indeed, he is more powerless than that [worshipped thing] and more ignominious. That is why they say that this world is like a shadow, if you chase it, it eludes you and if you leave it, it pursues you. The pursuer of this world is more contemptible than this world and of less worth than it; this world has no power of effect and so how can it be the cause of actualising something for that person? Indeed this world is a fading shadow and so he [its pursuer] is thus the shadow of a shadow; but there can be no shadow for the shadow of a shadow. The shadow belongs to an essence and it [this world] possesses no essence and so he can enjoy neither possession nor power; *and one on whom We have bestowed a fair provision from Us*, and one who loves Us and turns to Us with his heart, who disengages from all that is other than Us and devotes himself exclusively to Us, We shall give him reinforcement, power and provide him with kingdom and wisdom, showering him with outward and inward graces, since he will have turned towards the Master of the Kingdom, the Gracious to all, the Invincible in strength and power, and who has thus earned for his soul faculty, effect and power from Him so that engendered beings and bodies are affected by him and the kingdom and

the angelic realm obey him, in the same way that God, exalted be He, inspired to David, peace be upon him, [that He has commanded]: ‘O world, serve him who serves Me and wear out him who serves you’. Then if such [a person’s] noble aspiration should flourish [rising] high above engendered beings and not halt with his love of other than God or turn its attention to what is besides Him, We will increase his provision and grant him Our attributes, effacing his attributes, teaching him knowledge from Us and empowering him with Our power, as He has said: ‘The [true] servant will not cease to draw close to Me through supererogatory devotions until I love him. And when I love him I become the hearing with which he hears ...’ [to the end of] the *ḥadīth*; ***such that he expends thereof secretly and openly***: he expends of the inward graces, such as knowledge and wisdom secretly, and of the outward ones openly; or [it is] that he expends of both secretly, as with the one that arrives to people without his being the cause of its arrival outwardly, when in reality it arrived because of him since he is in that instance a means of the Divine Existence and the deputy of His Presence; or [he expends of both] openly, as with the one which he himself outwardly causes the arrival of. ***Are they equal?***, an interrogative intended as a rebuttal.

[16:76] Similarly, the idolater is like one who is dumb who never possessed in his creation a preparedness for speech since he [the idolater] was not prepared for perception or [for] the intellect, which is the specific quality of the human being, in order to perceive the necessity of the existence of the Truth, exalted be He, and His perfectedness or the contingency of the other and his deficiency, such that he could dissociate from what is other than Him and take refuge with Him instead of with the strength or might of his soul or those of another; ***having no power over anything***, because of his incapacity and the failure of his faculty due to the deficiency that adheres to his [defective] preparedness, ***and who is a liability to his master***, because of his inability by nature to actualise his need; and so he is naturally a slave [to him], needy and submissive before the other, lagging behind the level of everything since he is less than nothing as the contingent being which he worships is nothing, whether that [contingent thing] be a king, a celestial sphere, a planet or an intellect or otherwise; ***wherever he directs him, he does not bring any good***, because of his lack of preparedness and his evilness by nature, such that he corresponds only to evil which is non-existence. How then can he bring any good? ***Is he equal***, to the affirmer of Oneness who subsists in God and who is annihilated to what is other than Him and even to his own soul, one who upholds the truth, treats creatures with justice and enjoins justice? For justice is the shadow of the unity in the world of multiplicity. Thus wherever he upholds the unity of the Essence, the shadow of that [unity] falls upon all, and so he is always an

enjoiner of justice, *and follows a path that is straight?*, that is, the path of God upon whom are His elect from among the folk of subsistence after annihilation, the one stretched out for the folk of the reality over the hellfire of nature and which they cross [as quickly] as a lightning flash.

[16:77] *And to God belongs the Unseen of the heavens and the earth*: in other words, to God belongs the knowledge of what is hidden in the heavens and the earth pertaining to the matter of the major resurrection or the knowledge of the levels of the seven unseens to which we have referred, such as the unseen of the jinn, the soul, the heart, the mystery, the spirit, the hidden and the unseen of unseens, or what is unseen of the reality of both, namely, the dominion of the world of spirits and the world of bodies. *And the matter*, of the major resurrection in comparison with matters that belong in time, *is but*, as the closest time which the similitude of the twinkling of an eye expresses, *or it is [even] nearer*. This is [expressed] on the basis of simile, for [in reality] the matter of the Hour is not a temporal one and what is atemporal is perceived by the one who perceives it outside time. *Truly God is has power over all things*, with power to bring death, give life and reckon outside of time, as is witnessed by His folk and His elect.

[16:79] *Have they not observed the birds*, the spiritual and ego-centric faculties such as reflection and the intellect, both the considerative and the practical, nay indeed, estimation and imagination, *[how they are] made subservient in the air of heaven?*, that is, [in] the space of the world of spirits. *Nothing holds them*, without attachment to substrata and without dependence on some heavy body, *except God*.

[16:83] *They recognise God's grace*, that is to say, the guidance of the Prophet or his presence, in light of what we have mentioned, namely, that every prophet is sent with a perfection that corresponds to the preparednesses of his community and he enjoys a genus-correspondence with them in terms of his primordial nature so that they are able to recognise him by the faculty of their primordial nature; *and they then deny it*, because of their obduracy and their falling into sin as a result of the mastery [over them] of the attributes of their souls such as arrogance, haughtiness, love of power, or because of their disbelief and their being veiled from the light of primordial nature through evil dark configurations and the alteration of [their] first preparedness; *and most of them are ingrates*, in denying that [grace] by virtue of the fact that their primordial natures have borne witness to the truth thereof.

[16:84] *And the day We shall raise up from every community a witness*: that is, [when] We send forth their prophet in the maximum perfection which his community is able to arrive at or to draw close to and orient themselves toward by the possibility of their

recognition of him and so they recognise him. That is why for every community there will be a witness other than the witness of the next community, so that every person who has fallen short or contravened his prophet by rejecting the perfection to which he calls and by halting with the bottommost pits of deficiency shall come to recognise his shortcoming and his veiledness. Thus he will have no argument and nothing to speak, remaining bewildered and full of anguish. That is the meaning of His words: *then the disbelievers will not be given permission*. Nor will he have any means of comprehending what has eluded him of his perfection, because of the lack of instrument; but nor will he be able to accept his state, because of the potency of his primordial preparedness to which he moulded and his original instinctive yearning for that [perfection]. Thus he remains in suppressed anger, neither being asked to make amends nor his satisfaction being sought.

[16:87] *And on that day they will offer to God submission*, and obedience. Their denial has already been mentioned, as in where He says: *the day when God will raise them all together, whereupon they will swear to Him just as they swear to you [now]* [Q. 58:18]. That is according to the halting place [at the Resurrection]. The denial at that first halting is at the moment of the potency of the configurations of vice and the intensity of the unyieldingness of the soul in its devilishness and at its utmost remoteness from the divine light because of its being veiled with thick veils and dark coverings such that he is not even aware that he is inspecting and contemplating it, and [it is at the moment of] the extreme sulliedness of the light of preparedness such that he is even able to manifest the opposite of what it [that preparedness] entails. Submission at the second halting place takes place after the passage of several ages of the hours of that Day, ‘whose span is fifty thousand years’ [cf. Q. 70:4], when the configurations have dissipated and the natural inclination of the soul to vices has thinned and weakened, and [when] he has drawn close to the world of light because of the thinness of the veils and the flashing of the light of his first primordial nature, whereupon he will admit [the truth] and yield — that is if the submission and the denial are on the part of individual souls: submission then can be in the case of those in whom the configurations of their vices have not taken deep root, their veils have not become thick and the light of their preparedness has not been extinguished; while denial is in the case of those in whom the configurations have taken deep roots and have become potent, so that devilishness has overcome them and established itself [in them], their veil being dense and their preparedness having failed. But God knows best;

[16:89] *and We shall bring you as a witness against these*: this has already been mentioned in *sūrat al-Nisā*<sup>7</sup>. *And We have revealed to you the Book*, namely, the



Discriminating Intellect after the existence that is bestowed by the Truth, *as a clarification of all things*, explaining and verifying the truth of all things, and as a guidance to his perfection for whoever submits and yields to the soundness of his primordial nature, *and a mercy*, for him by making him attain that perfection by means of [spiritual] nurturing and reinforcement, and as good tidings to him that he will subsist in that perfection forever beyond time in the three gardens.

[16:91] *And fulfil God's covenant*, which is the remembering of the former covenant and the renewing of it through the later pledge to remain upon His judgement in rejecting all that is other [than Him] and disengaging from impediments and attachments in orienting oneself to Him; *when you made a covenant*, that is, [when] you remembered Him by the rising of the light of the Prophet over you and his reminder to you [of Him].

[16:97] *Whoever performs a righteous deed, whether male or female*, that is, a deed that brings him [or her] to the perfection that his [or her] preparedness entails. For righteousness in an individual is [the degree of] his [or her] orientation towards his [or her] perfection or his [or her] very being upon that perfection, while corruption is the opposite [of that]. [Righteousness] in terms of deed is that it [the deed] be a connective means to that [perfection] from a person who possesses a heart that has attained perfected manhood or a person who possesses a soul that is receptive to the influence of the heart and draws effusions from it, *and is a believer*, that is, one who is convinced of the truth in a categorical way, for the righteousness of a deed requires soundness of conviction, or else his perfection would not be conceptualised according to how it should be and he would not believe in it in the way that he ought to and so it would not be possible for him to perform a deed that would make him reach that [perfection] and so what he would then be doing would not be righteous in reality, even if it took on the [external] appearance of righteousness; *him verily We shall revive with a goodly life*, that is, a real life, after which there is no death, by means of disengagement from corporeal substrata and devoting oneself to the path of the timeless [divine] lights and taking pleasure in the perfectedness of the attributes in the witnessings of the self-disclosures of the acts and of the attributes. *And We shall surely pay them their reward*, in the way of the gardens of the acts and the attributes, *according to the best of what they used to do*, since their deeds correspond to their attributes which constitute the principles of their acts, while their reward corresponds to Our attributes which are the

sources of Our acts: behold then how great the contrast between the two in terms of fairness.<sup>2</sup>

[16:98] *And when you recite the Qur'ān, seek refuge in God:* rise from the station of the soul by ascending to the Side of the Holy, for the soul is the refuge of every impurity and the spring of every abomination, corresponding to the evil whisperings of Satan and disengaging them with its conversations. Once you rise above its abode, Satan has no power over you since he is unable to bear the light of the presence of the Truth and the presence of the heart, the landing place for His lights, the side of His holy attributes and the locus for His luminous self-disclosures. So seek refuge in these [luminous self-disclosures] and seek refuge with the light of God in them so that the edifice of your faith remains sturdy through certainty. For the faith alongside which there no longer remains the power of Satan — as God, exalted be He, says,

[16:99] *Indeed he has power over those who believe* — its least degrees is cognitive certainty whose locus is the pure heart; but this certainty is not enough to preclude his [Satan's] power unless it is joined with the presential vision of the acts, which is the station of trust, as God, exalted be He, says: *and who put their trust in their Lord.* Annihilation in the acts is not possible while the attributes of the soul subsist, since the subsistence of its attributes necessitates [the subsistence of] its acts. That is why it is said that it is not possible to fulfil the due of a station, to certify it and consolidate it except after rising to the one above it. Thus by rising to the station of the attributes, the acts are annihilated and thus [the station of] trust becomes valid.

[16:100] *His [Satan's] power is only over those who choose him as [their] ally,* at the station of the soul by virtue of the correspondence that is between them in terms of darkness and impurity, since the adoption of an ally is dictated by the genus-correspondence [between a person and his ally], *and those who associate him [with God],* by attributing power and effect to him, nay by obeying him and complying with his commands by virtue of the alliance mentioned [above].

[16:106] *Whoever disbelieves in God after [having affirmed] his faith,* by virtue of the fact that darkness in his case is essential as per his first preparedness and the light accidental, and so he is in a creational veil from the light of faith. If he is touched by a holy ray [of light] from the prophet's soul or from the holy effusion, or if he is affected by the promise [of reward] or the threat [of punishment], or [if he is affected] by a word of truth while being summoned to the truth, in a state in which his heart is open [to it], and an ego-centric motivation urges him because there is some benefit to be

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<sup>2</sup> In other words, how much fairer is their reward than the deeds they performed to deserve it.

actualised or some harm to be warded off relating to his property or reputation or [the actualisation of] some glory [for him] by means of submitting [to Islam], he manifests faith outwardly but his station and abode is [still] that of unbelief, then he has merited God's wrath since he is veiled, as per his preparedness, from the first of the levels of faith which is the presential vision of the acts by deducing the Creator from [His] handiwork; thus his punishment will issue from the acts and the attributes; but not him, *who is compelled*, to disbelief as a result of being warned and being made fearful, *while his heart is at rest*, firm, fixed and filled, *with faith*, by the luminosity of his primordial nature from origins and the fact that in his case light is something essential, as per his primordial nature, while disbelief and veiledness are accidental [in his case] precipitated by the exigencies of createdness, and the accidental veil has been removed — *but he who opens up his breast to unbelief*, that is, the one whose soul delights in it, is satisfied and reassured [by it] due to the fact that it constitutes that person's residence and original refuge, *upon such shall be*, terrible, *wrath from God, and there is a great chastisement for them*, for being veiled from all of the levels of light, such as the acts, the attributes and the essence: how thick is their veil and how awful is their chastisement!

[16:107] *That*, opening up of the breast to unbelief and contentment with it, *is because they have preferred the life of this world to the Hereafter*, since it constitutes the limit and ultimate extent of their knowledge and their knowledge does not extend to the Hereafter because the insights of their hearts are blocked and their preparedness corresponds to the dark lower matters such as corporeal substrata and so they have come to love what they can sense and this suits their state, even though the love of this world is the source of every sin as that [love] necessitates the thick veil behind which and in the folds of which lies all sin, *and because God does not guide the disbelieving folk*, that is, those who are veiled by the thickest veils since it is impossible for them to receive guidance.

[16:108] *They are the ones on whose hearts God has set a seal*, by virtue of the hardness and impurity of these [hearts] from the outset such that the paths of inspiration, understanding and unveiling are not open to them, *and on their hearing and their sight*, by the blocking the path of the desired meaning from their ears and the path of conceptual consideration from their eyes to their hearts such that none of the means to guidance have any effect on them, neither inwardly through the effusion of the spirit and the angelic casting and the rising of the light, nor outwardly through instruction and learning or conceptual consideration from the vestiges of the [divine] handiwork,

*and it is they who are heedless*, in reality since they are completely inattentive and are utterly incapable of waking from the sleep of ignorance.

[16:109] *Without a doubt in the Hereafter they are the ones who will be the losers*, those who have forsaken their life of this world by exhausting all their capacities in actualising it and destroying their lives in pursuit of it. There is nothing for them in the Hereafter except the chastisement of the configurations of attachment and the evil consequence of anguish.

[16:110] *Then indeed your Lord*: what [great] divergence there is between these veiled ones over whom indeed your Lord stands in wrath and subjugation and those over whom God stands indeed with satisfaction and mercy, being those who have emigrated from the abodes of the soul by abandoning familiars and objects of lust, *after they were tempted*, and tested by virtue of [their being a] human creation, *and then struggled*, for the sake of God by means of acts of spiritual discipline and wayfaring along His path by rising through the stations and disengaging from configurations and attachments, *and were patient*, in withstanding what the soul loves and loathes by remaining firm along the [spiritual] journey — *indeed your Lord*, after these states, *is Forgiving*, of them by hiding [for them] the coverings of the ego-centric attributes, *Merciful*, by effusing perfections and substituting their attributes with the divine attributes.

[16:112] *And God strikes a similitude*, of the prepared soul that is receptive and clear of impurities, draws on the effusion of the heart, remains firm along the path of earning virtues, is secure against the loss of these and their passing away and is reassured in its convictions: *its provision*, in the way of profitable forms of knowledge and praiseworthy virtues and noble lights, *coming to it plenteously from every place*, that is, from every aspect, [from] the coporeal paths, such as the senses which provide it with the nourishment of forms of particular knowledge, the limbs and the instruments which obey it in [the performance of] virtuous deeds and train it in qualities of excellence, if it is compliant with the heart and obedient to it, receptive of its effusion and subsisting in its conviction with regard to the truth by way of imitation, and from the aspect of the heart, such as the reinforcement of lights and configurations of excellence; but then it manifests itself in its attributes with arrogance and with vain pride in its ornament and perfection, inspecting its essence in its bliss and splendour so that it ends up becoming veiled by its evil attributes from those lights and inclines to base matters that pertain to the adornment of this world and sensory pleasures. The reinforcement of the heart is then cut off from it and the meanings that come to it by means of the senses are transformed into the dark configurations that are the forms of sensory objects to which it has become attracted; *so God made it taste the garb of hunger and fear*, by the cutting

off of reinforcement in the way of meanings, qualities of excellence and lights from the heart and by making it fear the loss of its acquisitions in the way of [its] sensory lusts and familiars as well as the objects of its passionate desires, *[all] because of what they used to do*, in the way of ingratitude towards God's graces by using these to pursue sensory pleasures and worldly ornaments and because of its manifesting itself in its attributes and admiring its perfections and resting in peace with this world and its pleasures, and because of its mastery over the heart with its configurations and acts, veiling that person from its [the heart's] light and reinforcement by seeking its passionate desires — as the Commander of the Believers [‘Alī b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, said: ‘We seek refuge in God from going astray after having been guided’ — in a town the attribute of which is that which has been mentioned.

[16:113] *And verily there came to them a messenger from among them*, that is, of their own genus, being the faculty of reflection which belongs with the totality of the soul's faculties, with rational concepts and truthful opinions, *but they denied him*, by failing to be affected thereby and to obey its commands and prohibitions, both the rational ones and those of the Law, and by refraining from conducting themselves according to its requirements and by being little concerned therewith and not caring in the slightest to turn their attention away from that in which they were engrossed, *and so*, the chastisement of being veiled and deprived from the pleasure of perfection, *seized them*, while they were unjust and deviating from the path of virtue and failing to fulfill the dues of their companion [the messenger].

[16:120] *Truly Abraham was a community*: it has already been mentioned how each prophet sent to a people with a perfection that subsumes all of the perfections of that community and [with] such an extent that his community cannot attain a level except that is below his. Thus he constitutes the sum-total of the perfections of his people and it is only through him that a perfection such as good or happiness reaches them. Nay, their very existences are effused from his existence and so he by himself constitutes a community since in reality they come together in his essence, which is why he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, said: ‘If I were to be weighed against my community, I would outweigh them’; *[devotionally] obedient*, to God, yielding and compliant before Him in such a way that not a single hair of his moves except by His command, as the warrant of the affirmation of [His] Oneness holds sway over him, his attributes having been effaced by His attributes and hi being united with His Essence. That is why he [Abraham] was called ‘God's Intimate Friend’, because the Truth has befriended him in his presential vision; thus His friendship [of Abraham] represents an admixture of a remnant of his essence that verges on a duality. Do you not see how the

Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, when there no longer remained any remnant of him, was called the Beloved of God. Thus the effacement of his attributes in the attributes of the Truth totally and the subsisting of a vestige of his essence but not his entity constitutes his [devotional] obedience (*qunūt*) to God, else he would have been obedient through God and not to God, as He said to Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon him: *and your patience is only by [the help of] God* [Q. 16:127]; *a ḥanīf*, who inclines away from every falsehood, even from his own existence and the existence of anything that is other than Him, exalted be He, and refuses to affirm that [thing]; *and he was not of the idolaters*, by attributing existence and effect to another;

[16:121] *grateful [as he was] for His graces*, in other words, putting them to the use in the way which they ought to be [put], since he disposes of these [graces] by means of God's attributes, such that his acts become divine and sought for their essence and not for some [other] purpose. In this way he is the power and the ability to direct every grace only towards that which constitutes its perfection as entailed by divine wisdom and [His] timeless solicitude. *He chose him*, selecting him for the first solicitude without the intermediary of a deed on his part and that is because he is one of the beloved [of God] for whom the fairest reward has already gone forth from Him, such that for them unveilings precede their wayfaring; *and He guided him to a straight path*, that is to say, after the unveiling and the affirmation of the Oneness and the arrival at the source of union, He guided him to the wayfaring along His path so that his example might be followed, and He brings him back to the multiplicity from the unity and to the separation after the concentration in order to fulfil what is due to every person in the way of the levels of differentiation and [in order] to clarify the rules governing the [divine] self-disclosures at the station of fixity and uprightness. For otherwise, he would not be fit for prophethood.

[16:122] *And We gave him in this world good*, by allowing him to enjoy shares so that his soul might be strengthened for the establishing of the divine canons and the fulfilment of the dues of servanthood at the station of uprightness and to make it able to bear the burdens of the Message, and We gave him a mighty kingdom alongside prophethood, as He has said [elsewhere]: *and We gave them [the house of Abraham] a mighty kingdom* [Q. 4:54], so that he might be able to affirm the Law and apprise himself of the rules of the mission and fair remembrance, as He has said: *and We assigned for them a worthy repute [one] that is lofty* [Q. 19:50], and may blessings and peace be upon him, as He has said: *And We left for him among posterity: Peace be upon Abraham* [Q. 37:108-109]; *and in the Hereafter*, that is, in the world of spirits, *he will*

*indeed be among the righteous*, those enjoying fixity at the station of uprightness by fulfilling the dues of every deserving one and making him attain his perfection and preserving him thereupon as long as possible.

[16:123] *Then We revealed to you*, that is to say, after these charisms and good things which We gave him in both abodes, We [also] honoured him and exalted him by Our commanding of you to follow him: *[saying]: 'Follow the creed of Abraham*, in the affirmation of Oneness and the principles of religion, which do not change from one divine law to another, such as the matter of the origin and the final return, the gathering and the reckoning and the like of these; but not in the sub-branches of the law, their contexts and their stipulations, as these change in accordance with what is best [at a given point in time] and [in accordance] with the different times and natures and the states of people in terms of habits and character traits.

[16:124] *The Sabbath was only prescribed for those who differed concerning it*, in other words, what was prescribed for you was prescribed for them and so you are not obliged to follow Moses in that respect, but to follow Abraham.

[16:125] *Call to the way of your Lord*, to the end [of the verse]: let your call be confined to these three aspects, because the one being called [by you] will either be devoid of denial or not. If he is devoid [of it], by virtue of being at the station of simply ignorance without believing in anything, then he will either be one who is prepared and not incapable of perceiving demonstrated proof, indeed, will be given to demonstration by nature or not. If he is [of] the former [kind] then call him with wisdom and speak to him by means of demonstration and argued proof and guide him to the path of the affirmation of Oneness through gnosis. If his preparedness is deficient, then call him with fair exhortation and profound counsel in the way of warnings and good tidings, promises [of Paradise] and threats [of Hellfire], calls to restraint and inspiring [in him] awe, gentleness and making him desirous. If he is a denier of composite ignorance and false beliefs, then dispute with him by way of that which is best, by invalidating the beliefs to which he adheres in his school of thought gently and considerately in a way that would indicate to him that you are simply establishing the truth and invalidating falsehood and have no other objective. *Truly your Lord knows best those who stray from His way*, from pre-eternity, by virtue of that person's original wretchedness and so none of these three ways brings about any result in his case; *and He knows best those who are guided*, those who are prepared for and receptive to guidance on account of the purity of [their] primordial nature.

[16:126] *And if you retaliate*, to the end [of the verse]: in other words, adhere to the path of justice and virtuousness and do not overstep its bounds, for it constitutes the

least of the degrees of your perfection. Thus if you have a precedence in chivalry and a vein deeply rooted in virtue, generosity and manliness, then shun [the desire for] victory and retaliation against one who has committed an act [of wrong] against you. Stand up to him instead with forgiveness, even as you are able [to retaliate], and endure patiently wrong [committed against you], for: *verily that is better for the patient*. Do you not see how He has emphasised this [fact] by [the use of] the oath and the *lām* in the response [to the oath] and moved from the covert [noun] to the overt such that He does not say, ‘verily that is better for you’, but rather, ‘verily that is better for the patient’, in order to put on record that they are being praised and extolled for the attribute of patience? For the patient one has risen above the station of the soul and has responded to the act of the soul of his counterpart with the attribute of the heart and is not tarnished by the manifestation of the attribute of [his] soul and he has countered the darkness of the soul of his counterpart with the light of his heart. It often happens that the person is remorseful and bypasses the station of the soul and the vehemence of his wrath is broken so that he becomes righteous. If you are not at this noble station, then [at least] do not retaliate against the evildoer by the vehemence of [your] wrath with more than what was committed against you so that you end up being unjust or fall into the vilest and most indecent of vices and your state is corrupted and the evil consequences for you become the greater than those of the one who [initially] wronged [you].

[16:127] *So be patient, and your patience is only by [the help of] God*: know that patience is of several types: patience for God, patience in God, patience with God, patience away from God and patience by God. Patience for God is one of the concomitants of faith and the first degree for the people of Islam. The Prophet, blessings and peace be upon him: ‘Faith consists of two halves: half is patience and half is gratitude’. This [kind of patience] is to restrain the soul from anxiety when a desired thing has eluded [it] or when something undesirable has befallen [it], and this is one of the most excellent of character traits bestowed [as gift] from the bounty of God for the folk of His religion and His obedience, and is [the patience] that entails the plenteous reward. Patience in God is to remain firm in wayfaring along the path of the Truth and to habituate the soul to spiritual struggle voluntarily and to refraining from familiars and pleasures and to [train it to] endure afflictions and [to exercise] strong resolve in orienting itself to the source of perfections, and this is a station belonging to the wayfarers which God bestows [as gift] upon whomever He will from among the people of the [spiritual] path out of His bounty. Patience with God is for the people of the Presence and the Unveiling upon [their] disengagement from the garments of the acts and the attributes and [upon their] exposure to the self-disclosures of the Beauty and the Majesty and the



flow of the inrushes of intimacy and awe — thus this [type of patience] comes with presence of the heart, for the one who has a heart and with guarding against forgetfulness and absence during variegations resulting from the manifestation of the soul, which is more exacting upon the soul than being beaten on the head, even if it be extremely pleasurable. Patience away from God is for the people of crudeness and of the veil, whether it be luminous or dark, and this [type] is very loathsome and the person in question is deservedly blameworthy; and the more that he exercises this [kind of] patience the worse and the more remote that his state becomes, and the more that he is vehement therein the more blameworthy and the cruder he is; or it is for the people of the eyewitnessing and the witnessing from among the fervent lovers and the yearners who are turned about between the various stages of the self-disclosure and the self-concealment and who shun the human realm and are illumined by the light of the divine realm, subsisting without a heart and without a description. Each time that a light of the august glories of the lights of the Beauty appears to them they are consumed [by it] and are annihilated [therein], and each time that a veil is thrust in front of them and their faces are turned back as a way of making them yearn and an exaltation for them they taste of the pain of yearning and the burning of separation what their patience can no longer bear and their death is verified. That is of the states belonging to the lovers [of God] and there is nothing more burdensome than this [type of] patience and more difficult to bear and more deadly. If the lover is able to bear it then he is hidden and if he is unable to he is annihilated and destroyed in it. Shibli [famously] said [the following] with regard to this station:

He vied patiently against patience until patience called out for his help

Whereupon the lover cried out: 'Patience, with patience!'

In other words, the lover vied against patience patiently until patience sought his help when he was on the verge of being exhausted, whereupon the lover cried out 'be patient and endure patiently' exhaustion and destruction for therein lies success and prosperity. Patience by [means of] God is for the people of fixity at the station of uprightness, those whom God has totally annihilated and in whom He has left no remnant of ego or duality, and upon whom He then bestows existence from His Essence such that they subsist in Him and act through His attributes. That is one of God's character traits, exalted be He, and none has any share in it, which is why He enjoined it upon him [the Prophet] and then clarified that that patience to which you have been enjoined does not belong with the other types of patience such that it can exist by means of your soul or your heart. Rather it is My patience, one which you can exercise only by means of Me and which you can bear only by means of My strength. It is because of the inability of

his [the Prophet's] strength to fulfil [the requirements of] this [type of] patience that he [once] said: '*Sūrat Hūd* has made my hairs turn grey'.

*And do not grieve for them*, by [succumbing to] variegations at the heart manifesting itself through its attribute, because the person who enjoys this [type of] patience sees things with the eye of the truth, so that everything that issues from them he sees as being an act of God, and every attribute manifested in them, he sees as one of His self-disclosures and he also rejects what is morally indecent by means of His judgement, since God has made him see various kinds of self-disclosures, those of vanquishing, gentleness, wrath and satisfaction, and [because] He has made him aware of His judgements and has commanded him to execute [His] judgements in their [proper] places; *nor be in distress because of that which they scheme*, as your breast is opened up to Me. So be with them as you see how I am with them, conducting yourself as I do and subsisting through Me and by My command.

[16:128] *Truly God is with those who guard themselves*, against their remnants and their egos by expending themselves in the unity and immersing themselves in the source of the union, *and those who are virtuous*, through their presential vision of the unity at the source of multiplicity, and through obedience at the source of disobedience and through [their] observance of command and prohibition at the station of uprightness, and through [their] retaining the dues of differentiation at the source of the union so that the separation does not veil them from the concentration, nor the concentration from the separation, and they are able to be mindful of the Truth and [His] creatures, returning to multiplicity with a heart present that is from [Him] the Truth.



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[17:1] *Glory be to Him Who carried*, that is, [Who] raised him above [the blemishes of] material appendages and the deficiencies of similarity by the tongue of the state of disengagement and perfection at the station of servanthood wherein lies no power of disposal whatsoever, *by night*, that is, in the darkness of corporeal coverings and attachments of physical nature, since ascension and elevation can only be by means of the body, *from the Sacred Mosque*, that is, from the station of the sacred heart lest the idolater that are the corporeal faculties should circumambulate it and commit therein their acts of indecency and sins, and lest the misguided one of the animal faculties, the bestial and the predatorial — whose exposed shameful aspects, their excess and immoderation, by virtue of their being denuded from the garb of virtue — should perform the pilgrimage [there], *to the Farthest Mosque*, which is the station of the spirit, that is the furthest from the world of physical bodies, by means of the presential vision of the self-disclosures of the Essence and the august glories of the Face.

Remember what we mentioned [before] about [the fact] that the rectification of each station can only be after rising to the one above it, so that you might understand His words 'that We might show him some of Our signs' as [denoting] the witnessing of the attributes. For even if the contemplation of the self-disclosures of the attributes should take place at the station of the heart, the Essence that is qualified by these attributes can only be witnessed in its perfection through the attributes of the Majesty and the Beauty upon rising to the station of the spirit. In other words, that We might show him some the signs of Our attributes from the point of view that these [attributes] are ascribed to Us and that We are witnessed by them and exteriorised in their forms.

*Indeed He is the Hearing*, of his [the Prophet's] communions at the station of mystery seeking annihilation, *the Seeing*, of the potency of his preparedness and of his orientation to the locus of presential vision and his attraction thereto by the intensity of his love and the perfectedness of his yearning [for God].

[17:2] *And We gave Moses*, the heart, the Book of knowledge, *and made it a guidance for the Children of Israel*, that is, the faculties who are the grandchildren of Israel the spirit: *[saying] that they should not choose beside Me any guardian*, that they should not proceed headstrong with their acts or independently in seeking their perfections and shares and that they should not seek to earn according to the requirements of their motivations or delegate their affair to the Satan of estimation lest he seduce you with corporeal pleasures, nor [delegate] to the intellect of livelihood lest it should employ you to nurture it and make it righteous. Nay, delegate your affair to Me so that I might

manage you with the provisions of knowledge, gnoses, configurations of character traits and virtues, and that I might perfect you with the reinforcements of lights from the world of the heart and the spirit through the assistance of the Holiness and that I might send down upon from the worlds of the angelic realm and the realm of divine power what would avail you of the earnings of the realm of human nature, I mean:

[17:3] *[They were] descendants of those whom We carried with Noah*, the intellect, in the Ark of divine law and practical wisdom. *Indeed he was a grateful servant*, by virtue of his acknowledgement of God's graces and using them in the way in which they ought to be [used].

[17:4] *And We decreed to the Children of Israel*, the faculties, in the Book of the Preserved Tablet, in other words, We judged therein: *'You shall indeed work corruption in the land twice*: once at the station of the soul when it is commanding, at which point you will work corruption in seeking your passionate desires and your pleasures, *and you shall indeed become great tyrants'*, by dominating the heart, overcoming it and becoming masters over it and preventing it from its perfection and putting its reflective faculty to the service of actualising your demands and your goals; and again at the station of the heart when you adorn yourselves with virtues and are illumined by the light of the heart and manifest yourselves in the bliss of your perfections, you will work corruption in manifesting yourselves through your perfections and in the veiling of the heart with your virtues from the presential vision of the self-disclosure of the Oneness. Luminous veils are more powerful than veils of darkness because of their delicateness and subtlety and because of their conceptualisation of perfections with which it is necessary to halt; and you shall indeed become great tyrants at the station of primordial nature by domineering through intellectual configurations and human perfections.

[17:5] *So when the time for the first of the two [prophecies] came*, that is, the time of the evil sequel for the first of the two, *We roused against you servants of Ours*, from among the attributes of the heart and the lights of the angelic realm and intellectual opinions, *of great might*, possessing authority and [power of] subjugation, *who ransacked*, the habitations of your abodes and loci, slaying some of you through repression and subjugation and enslaving the offspring of corporeal configurations and ego-centric vices and plundering the substance of sensory objects of perception and bestial and predatory pleasures, *and it was a promise*, from God, *that would come to pass*, since He has deposited the potential for perfection and the demand for it in your preparedness and has centred the proofs of the intellect in your primordial nature.

[17:6] *Then We gave you back*, the turn [of power] by virtue of your illumination by the light of the heart and your turning to the breast and your turning your attention to the requirements of the intellect's consideration and opinion, *and We aided you with wealth*, of beneficial knowledge and rational wisdoms and those of the divine law as well

as gnoses of the heart, *and children*, in the way of excellent qualities in character traits and luminous configurations, *and made you greater in number*, by virtue of the great number of virtues, excellent natural dispositions and virtuous character traits.

[17:7] *'If you are virtuous*, in actualising the perfections of character traits and rational opinions, *you are being virtuous to your own souls, and if you do evil*, by earning vices and corporeal configurations, *it is for them'*. *So when the time for the other [prophecy] comes*, at the annihilation in the Oneness, We roused against you servants in the way of holy lights, self-disclosures of the Majesty and vanquishing august glories from among the divine attributes as well as the hosts of the warrant of the [divine] Tremendousness and Augustness, *that they might ravage your countenances*, your existences by means of annihilation in the Oneness so that you are overcome by the gloom of the loss of perfections by having these vanquished and taken away, *and that they might enter*, the temple of the heart, *just as they entered it the first time*, and the effect thereof reached you in the way of [your acquisition of] forms of knowledge and virtues, *and that they might destroy all that they conquered*, when they manifested themselves in its [the heart's] perfection and excellence and were proud to see its adornments and bliss, *utterly*, by being annihilated in the attributes of God.

[17:8] *It may be that your Lord will have mercy upon you*, after subjugating [you] through annihilation and effacing [you] through the self-disclosures of the attributes by means of giving [you] life and that He will resurrect you by means of subsistence after annihilation and reward you with what no eye has [ever] seen, no ear has [ever] heard of or has [ever] occurred to the mind of a human; *but if you revert*, through variegations at the station of annihilation by manifesting yourselves in your I-ness, *We [too] will revert*, with subjugation and annihilation, as He says [further on]: *And if We had not made you [stand] firm, certainly you might have inclined to them a little. Then We would have surely made you taste a double in life and a double upon death. Then you would not have found for yourself any helper against Us* [Q. 17:74-75]; *and We have made the Hellfire*, of physical nature, *for the disbelievers*, who are veiled from the lights, those who remain upon the [way of] corruption at the first time, *a dungeon*, a jail and a prison that confines them to the chastisement of veiledness and privation from reward.

[17:9] *Truly this Qur'ān guides to that which is straightest*, in other words, it elucidates the states of the three groups, those who are foremost, the people of the right and the people of the left. It guides to the way of affirming the Oneness which is the straightest way for those who are foremost, *and gives good tidings to the believers*, from among the people of the right, those who have faith by pure imitation or by cognitive verification and who maintain the performance of acts of self-cleansing and righteous adornment because it is by these that perfection is arrived at, *that there is a great reward for them*, in the way of the bliss of the gardens of the acts and the attributes in the worlds of the kingdom, the angelic realm and the realm of divine power.

[17:10] *And that those who do not believe*, from among the people of the left, *in the Hereafter*, by virtue of their being corporeal folk, veiled from the world of light and imprisoned in the darkneses of physical nature, *We have prepared for them a painful chastisement*, in the pit of the dungeon of physical nature, fettered in the chains of the love of lower things and in the shackles of attachments, in the fires of privation from pleasures and passionate desires, chastised by the scorpions and snakes of the configurations of darkness.

[17:12] *And We made*, the night of engendered being and the darkness of the body and the day of origination [from nothing] and the light of the spirit means by which and by knowledge of which one arrives at the spiritual knowledge of the Essence and the attributes. *Then We effaced the sign of the night*, through corruption and annihilation, *and made the sign of the day*, a clear sign that subsists forever, light-giving by virtue of its perfectedness and by virtue of whose light realities are perceived, *that you may seek bounty from your Lord*, that is, your perfection, for which you prepare yourselves, *and that you may know the number of*, [spiritual] levels and stations, in other words, that you may count them from the first state of your beginning to the advanced age of your end by rising through them and that you may reckon your deeds, your character traits and your states so that whenever you find an evil deed you expunge it with a good one that is its counterpart from the same genus [of action], or [whenever you find] a vice amongst your character traits you expunge it by its opposite virtue or [if it should be] a sin of one of your states you expunge it by returning repentant to the Side of the Truth; *and everything*, in the way of forms of knowledge and wisdoms, *We have detailed*, by the light of your intellects at the point of perfectedness and the descent of the Discriminating Intellect, *very distinctly*, that is, as differentiated knowledge that is present, as opposed to undifferentiated [knowledge] of which you are unaware, as is the case with the Discriminating Intellect at the beginning.

[17:13] *And We have attached every person's omen upon his neck*, that is to say, We have made his felicity and his wretchedness, the cause of goodness or [the cause] of evil for him a concomitant of his essence that adheres [to him] in the way that a necklace adheres to the neck, as he [the Prophet] once said: "The fortunate one is the one who has been [appointed as] fortunate in his mother's womb and the wretched one is the one who has been [appointed as] wretched in his mother's womb"; *and We shall bring forth for him on the Day of*, the minor, *Resurrection*, upon his exiting from the tomb of his body, *a book*, a frame that takes the form of his deeds and which is attached around his neck, *which he will find*, given that it adheres to him, *wide open*, because of those configurations appearing therein in actuality in detail, and not folded [shut] as it had been when those [configurations] were there in potential.

[17:14] It will be said to him: *'Read your book!'* in other words read as one who has been commanded and is obedient to the command of an Obeyed Commanding One

who commands him to read, or who is commanded [to read] by the angelic faculties, whether he reads or not, for deeds then shall be imaginalised according to their configurations and forms so that they will be recognised by all, and will not be written in letters so that an illiterate one is unable to recognise them. *This day your soul suffices as your own reckoner*': because his soul shall witness what it did adhering to it, before its very eyes, in detail. It is unable to deny it and so someone other than it elucidates that for it.

[17:15] *No burdened soul shall bear the burden of another*, because of the deep-rootedness in it of the configuration of what it has done and because of its [this configuration] becoming a disposition that adheres to it, to the exclusion of what one other than it has done and of which nothing has affected it. The one who is chastised is only chastised for the configurations which are in him and not because of anything external to him. *And We never chastise until We have sent a messenger*, the messenger of the intellect to make the definitive proof binding [upon his audience] and to discriminate between truth and falsehood. Do you not see that a [pre-pubescent] boy and a mentally deficient person are not legally obligated; or [until We have sent] the messenger of the Law due to the fact that whatever good or evil in [that] preparedness or felicity or wretchedness will have become manifest because of that [Law] and because he will have been responded to either with affirmation or denial. For, as regards the one who is prepared for perfection, what is in him by way of potential begins to stir when he hears the [messenger's] call and so he begins to yearn and seeks it receptively, affirming and accepting what he [the messenger] is calling him to, by virtue of his correspondence and proximity to him. As for the one who lacks preparedness, he denies and rejects obstinately by virtue of his incompatibility with what he [the messenger] is calling him to and his distance from it.

[17:16] *And when We desire to destroy a town*, to the end [of this verse]: to everything in this world there comes elimination and this elimination comes as a result of a preparedness that entails it. Just as the elimination of the body, by the elimination of moderation and the actualisation of deviance, makes a thing distant from the shadow of the Oneness, which is the cause of the subsistence and firm existence of everything, so too is the case when it comes to the destruction of a town and its elimination because of the occurrence of a deviation in it from the straight path, which is the path of God, that is, the [divine] Law that preserves [the cosmic] order. So when the time comes for the destruction of a town it will have undoubtedly become deserving of destruction, and that will be as a result of some wickedness or refusal to obey God. Thus when His will pertains to its destruction there precedes necessarily the wicked acts of its affluent inhabitants, those wealthy and comfortable folk who were arrogant and insolent with God's graces, using them in other than the way in which they ought to be [used]: that [comes] by a command of God and a determining by Him, because of a wretchedness



that had adhered to their preparednesses and upon which their destruction became necessary.

[17:18] *Whoever desires the hasty [world]*, because of the impurity of his preparedness and his being overcome by his vain desires and nature, *We hasten for him therein whatever We will, for whom We please*: that is, We do not give him more [purely] out of his own volition, no more than what We had determined for him in the way of [his] share in the [Preserved] Tablet. That is why He has made this [hastening] conditional upon His will and again [conditional] with His words ‘for whom We please’. In other words, if We had not determined any of what he desired, We would not have made it [possible] for him to exact it: We only give what We please to whom We please. *Then We appoint for him Hellfire*, that is, the bottommost pit of dark physical nature, because of his attraction, by his own desire, to the lower aspect and his inclination to it, *to which he will be exposed*, by means of the fires of privation, *condemned*, by the people of this world and those of the Hereafter, *and rejected*, from the Side of Mercy and Beatitude, under the wrath of God and His vanquishing.

[17:19] *And whoever desires the Hereafter*, by the purity of his preparedness and the soundness of his primordial nature and has fulfilled the preconditions of what he desires in the way of having faith and performing righteous deeds, his striving shall receive gratitude in the form of the actualisation of what he desired, as has been said, ‘He who seeks shall find’. For the true seeking and sincere desire can only come about upon the actualisation of the preparedness of the thing sought. When that preparedness — which is the indication that the thing sought has been actualised for him in potentiality and that there has been determined for him in the [Preserved] Tablet the [very] causes for the emergence into actuality of what is being sought and [the causes for] its projection from the Unseen to the visible, which is the striving required for that [thing] and what constitutes a duty upon him to strive for, in the way meant by His words: *and strives for it with the necessary effort*, that is, the striving required for it [of him] — is combined with the precondition of faith in the Unseen that enjoys certitude, then that [thing which he desires] will necessarily be actualised for him.

[17:20] *Each We supply [to] these and [to] those*, in other words, We supply all of the seekers of this world and the seekers of the Hereafter from Our bounty, and it is not [supplied] simply because of their desires or striving [for it]. Rather their desire and striving are indicators and tokens of the bounty which We have determined for them. *And your Lord’s bounty is not restricted*, prohibited to anyone, neither to the obedient folk nor to the disobedient ones.

[17:21] *See how We have given preference to some of them over others*, in this world, in accordance with what Our will and wisdom entails. *And truly the Hereafter is greater in degrees*, since in the measure that the spirit outweighs the body [in worth] so the

degrees of the Hereafter outweigh those of this world and in the measure that they vary in excellence so their [respective] degrees vary.

[17:22] *Do not set up another god besides God*, by anticipating bounty from that [other god] and taking this [other] to be the cause of something reaching you which God has not determined for you so that you end up, *blameworthy*, for the vice of idolatrous association and doubt in the eyes of God and His folk, *forsaken*, by God who will then leave you [in false] reliance on that [other god] and assist you not: *but if He forsakes you, then who is there who can help you after Him?* [Q. 3:160]. The Prophet, may God bless him and grant him peace, said: 'If the [Muslim] community were to come together to profit you in some way they shall not profit you except with what God has [already] determined for you. And if they were to come together to harm you in some way they shall not harm you except with what God has [already] determined for you. The [heavenly] pens have been put down and the [heavenly] scrolls have dried [of their ink]'. God, glorious and exalted be He, has joined kindness to parents to the affirmation of [His] Oneness, singling out as a form of worship [of Him] since it is one of the requirements of the affirmation of [His] Oneness, as the two [parents] correspond to the Divine Presence in terms of their causality for your existence and to the Lordly Presence in terms of their nurture of you while you were incapable, young and weak without strength or [even] movement. They are also the first locus for the manifestation of the effects of God's attributes, exalted be He, in terms of existention, nurturing, mercy and compassion for you. Despite [all of] that they need to have what is due to them fulfilled, while God has no need [whatsoever] of that. Thus the most important of duties after the affirmation of Oneness is kindness to them and the fulfilling of their dues as far as possible.

[17:44] *The seven heavens proclaim His praise*, to the end of this [verse]: everything has a specific quality which another does not have. And since what is other than him does not concern him, he yearns for it and seeks it when it is not actualised for him and he preserves it and loves when it is actualised [for him]. By manifesting his specific quality he exalts God as transcending partnership, for otherwise he would not be the exclusive possessor of that [specific quality], and so it is as though he were saying by the tongue of his state, 'I declare Him to be One for having made me unique'. And by seeking his perfection he is exalting Him as transcending the attributes of deficiency as though he were saying 'O Perfect One make me perfect'. And by manifesting his perfection he is saying 'The Perfect Perfecter has made me perfect'. On the basis of such analogy then even a lioness, for example, when it is compassionate towards its young she is [in effect] saying, 'The Gentle One has made me gentle', and 'The Merciful has made me merciful'. And by seeking provision, [one is likewise calling upon] 'the Provider'. Hence the seven heavens glorify Him for [His] everlastingness, perfection, exaltedness, [His] power of effect and that of existention and lordship, and for that *every day He is upon*

*some matter* [Q. 55:29]. And the earth [glorifies Him] for [His] permanence, firmness, power of creation, power of provision, nurture, compassion and mercy and [His] acceptance of acts of obedience and gratitude [performed] upon it by rewarding [these acts] and sundry examples the like thereof. And the angels [glorify Him] for [His] knowledge and power, and those disengaged essences among them [glorify Him] for being disengaged from matter and also for the necessity [of His existence] in addition to all of that, for as well as glorifying Him they sanctify Him, **but you do not understand their glorification**, because of the inadequacy with which you consider and reflect on the [divine] dominion of things and [your] lack of heedfulness of these. The only one who understands is *him who has a heart or gives ear in [full] witness* [Q. 50:37]. **Lo! He is Forbearing**, [towards you] by not hastening to demand your perfections or the manifesting of your specific qualities when you abandon the proclamation of His praise, for one of your specific qualities is to [be able to] understand their glorification and to declare Him One as they declare Him One, **Forgiving**, you your moments of heedlessness and neglectfulness.

[17:45] [*And when you recite the Qur'ān*] **We place between you and those who do not believe in the Hereafter**, because of the failure of their [faculty of] consideration to perceive spiritual realities and the confinement of their aspirations to corporeal things, **a bidden barrier**, [made of] ignorance and blindness of the heart so that they are unable to see the reality of the reciter, for otherwise they would have been believers. But they do not perceive [the truth of] you because they reckon you to be merely this human form since they are given to corporeal things, immersed as they are in the sea of primordial matter and veiled by coverings of physical nature and the garments of ego-centric attributes from the Truth and His attributes and His acts. For had they recognised the Truth they would have recognised you, and had they recognised His attributes they would have recognised His speech and there would not have been veils of natural coverings and corporeal configurations over their hearts.

[17:46] [*And We place upon their hearts veils*] **lest they should understand it**, for had they recognised His acts they would have known the recitation [of this Qur'ān] and there would not have been a deafness in their ears because of the deep rootedness of the dirt of attachments. [*And when you mention your Lord alone in the Qur'ān*] **they turn their backs in aversion**, because of the scattered nature of their vain desires and the dispersed nature of their aspirations in their devotion to their objects of worship such as the idols that are those corporeal things and those passionate desires. Thus their inner realities do not correspond to the meaning of the [divine] unity, familiar as they are with multiplicity and their veiledness therewith.

[17:52] **The day He calls you, you will respond with His praise**: that is to say, [the day when] His will pertains to sending you forth [from the graves] and so you are sent forth quicker than the blink of an eye, praising Him by your very life, knowledge, power and

desire with a [great] praise that entails your attributing to Him perfection by manifesting these perfections [of yours]; *and you will think that you have remained only a little*, that is, [that you remained only a little] in your graves or sleeping places because you become oblivious to that period of time, as is mentioned in the story of the people of the cave [Q. 18]. Or [that you have remained only a little time] in the first life because you deem it so short in comparison to the life of the Hereafter. Thus the lexical expression can be extended to subsume all three resurrections, except that the preceding verse gives greater weight to [that the reference is to] the minor one.

[17:64] *And tempt*, to the end of this [verse]: Satan's ability to lead servants astray divides into several aspects, because preparednesses [themselves] vary. And so he whose preparedness is weak, he [Satan] tempts, that is, he fools him with his voice: it is sufficient for him [Satan] to insinuate [to him] with evil whisperings, murmurings and the occasional evil thought. As for the one whose preparedness is strong, if he purifies his preparedness of the taints of ego-centric attributes or if God, exalted be He, has purified him of the taints of otherness, then he [Satan] has no power to lead them astray whatsoever, as He Himself says:

[17:65] *'Truly in the case of My servants, over them you shall have no power'*. Otherwise, if the person [in question] is immersed in sensory preoccupations with his head buried deep in the affairs of this world, he [Satan] will share with him in his wealth and children by goading him to share his love of them with [his love of] God, loving them as he loves God. And he will entice him to enjoy these, to multiply them and to be proud of their existence and he will fill him with false desires and adorn for him empty hopes. If the person is not immersed [so] and if he is aware and perceptive of his [Satan's] enticements, he [Satan] will rally against that person his cavalry and his infantry, in other words, he will scheme to deceive him with all manner of devices and plot against him with different kinds of temptations; and he will pronounce for him that the actualisation of all manner of ephemeral things [of this world] and pleasures is part [and parcel] of the welfare pertaining to [one's] livelihood; and he will delude him [with notions of grandeur] through knowledge and fill him with vanity and similar acts until that person becomes among those 'whom God has led astray knowingly' [cf. Q. 45:23]. If that person were not to be a person of knowledge but a devoted worshipper, of piety, he will lead him astray by making promises [to him] and filling him with desires, deceiving him with acts of obedience and self-purification in the easiest possible way. *And your Lord suffices as a guardian*: in other words, My elect servants entrust their affairs to God alone, neither to Satan nor to any other — and He shall indeed suffice them in managing their affairs — and they trust only in Him by witnessing His acts and His attributes.

[17:70] *And verily We have honoured the Children of Adam*, with [the faculties of] speech and discrimination, the intellect and gnosis, *and carried them over land and sea*,

that is, We have facilitated for them the means for [their] livelihood and [their] final return in their ability to journey to seek these [means] across the two and to actualise these [means], *and We have provided them with good things*, that is, with [those] composite things which no creatures other than them have been provided with, *and We have preferred them above many of those whom We created*, with the exception of the holy essences of the High Council. As for the preferment of certain humans, like prophets, over the near angels, it is not because of the fact that they are sons of Adam, since from that perspective they do not go beyond the station of the intellect, but it is rather from the perspective of the mystery that has been deposited in them, the one alluded to by His words *Assuredly I know what you know not* [Q. 2:30], which is the complete divine gnosis which He has prepared for that certain individual by means of the concentration in him, namely, the station of unity. In that instance, considered thus, he is not a son of Adam, as has been said:

‘Even if I am indeed a son of Adam in form, I also have a meaning within that is witness of my paternity [of him]’.

Nay, indeed he is the very essence of the honoured one, the one who is known, as has been said:

‘I saw my Lord with the eye of my Lord; He said, “Who are you?”, and I said, “You”.

In this station, the son of Adam has been annihilated and nothing of him remain — how else [could it be] when one is dust and the other the Lord of lords! Or [the verse means] that We have honoured the sons of Adam with proximity and knowledge of the affirmation of Oneness and have carried them over the land of the world of bodies and the sea of the world of spirits by making him journey across them since he is composed of them; and [We have honoured him] by making him rise higher in seeking perfection and We have provided them with the good things that are the forms of knowledge and gnosis and We have preferred them over a great number of what We have created, that is to say, [over] all creatures, provided that [the preposition] *min* [of *mimman*] is explicative and hyperbolic, intended to exalt him by describing those [creatures] over whom preferment is being expressed as being ‘many’ and by making the qualifier indefinite and placing this [indefinite] before what it qualifies, in other words, the [qualifier] *kathīr* (‘many’). Yet, what ‘many’ can it be when in fact it is the entirety of Our creatures by virtue of the fact that *min* is used to indicate generality;<sup>104</sup> *with a marked preferment*, one that is complete and clear.

[17:71] *The day when We shall summon*, to the end of this [verse], that is [the day when] We bring present, *every*, party of [every] community together with their witness who is present with them and to whom they orient themselves in terms of their

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<sup>104</sup> As opposed to being simply partitive.

perfection and whom they know, whether he be in the form of a prophet in whom they believed, as mentioned in the interpretation of His words *So how shall it be when We bring forward from every community a witness* [Q. 4:41], or [in the form of] an imam whose example they followed, or a religion or a book or whatever you will, provided that the [particle] *bi* is taken to mean ‘with’. Or [it is that] We attribute them to their imam and summon them by his name, since he prevails over them and over their affair, their love of whom stands high over their love of anything else. ***And whoever is given his book in his right hand***, that is, from the side of the intellect, which is the stronger of the person’s sides, and is sent forth in the form of the felicitous, ***those will read their book***, unlike others, by virtue of their preparedness for reading and understanding, since the one who is given his book in his left hand, that is, from the side of the soul, which is the weaker of the two sides, will not be able to read his book, even if it is readable, because his mind is lost and is utterly bewildered, ***and they will not be wronged***, that is, they will not have anything of the forms of their deeds, their perfections and character traits diminished, not [even] by a small amount.

[17:72] ***And whoever has been in this blind***, to being guided to the Truth, ***will be***, likewise, ***in the Hereafter, and [even] further astray***, [then] from the here and now, since in this life he enjoys [use of] various instruments, tools and means by which he is able to find the right way while he is at the station of earning with his preparedness intact, if there is one; but there [in the Hereafter] none of that remains.

[17:73] ***And indeed they were about to beguile you***, to the end [of the verse]: this pertains to those variegations which affect those of the hearts when the soul manifests itself and [affect] those of presential vision and annihilation when the heart remains present. For he [Muḥammad], peace be upon him, because of his desperate desire and eagerness that they [his people] believe, with the presence of [his] heart almost inclined to [comply with] a request of theirs and be satisfied with what contravened his law and to impute to God what is not of Him in his desire for the correspondence which he expected to come about between him and them as a result of that and so that they would come to love him — as He says ***and then they would have taken you as a friend*** — and that they might accept his words and be guided by him, and as a way of placating their hearts and making them incline that perhaps they might be mollified and relinquish their severe denial [of his message] so that their veil softens and their hearts are illumined. But he was rebuked and made upright [once again] by God, which is why ‘Ā’isha, may God, exalted be He, be pleased with her, once said that his character trait was [shaped by] the Qur’ān, meaning that with him, blessings and peace upon him, whenever his soul manifested itself and aspired to what was not meritorious, he was alerted [to that] by God and was made firm by the sending down of a verse that would make him rectify him and return him to uprightness until he attained the station of fixity. This and many instances the like of it are indicated by His words, exalted be He:

*It is not for any prophet to have prisoners* [Q. 8:67]; and [by] His words: *May God pardon you! Why did you give them leave...?* [Q. 9:43]; and [by] His words: *and you feared people, though God is worthier that you should fear Him* [Q. 33:37]; and [by] His words: *He frowned and turned away* [Q. 80:1], all of which indicates that the greater part of his wayfaring in God was after his arrival, during the period of prophethood and the period of revelation.

[17:75] *Then We would have surely made you taste*, that is, had you drawn near to their temptation and been on the verge of according with them, We would have made you taste a doubled chastisement in this life and a doubled chastisement in death, for the severity of chastisement depends on the sublimity of [one's] level and the potency of [one's] preparedness, since the deficiency that necessitates chastisement is proportional to the perfection that necessitates pleasure. So the more complete the preparedness and the more potent the [faculty of] perception the more potent the level of perfection, felicity and pleasure; likewise is the corresponding deficiency and wretchedness, which are more remote and lowlier and the pain more intense.

[17:78] *Establish prayer from the sun's decline*. Know that prayer is of five types: the prayer of intimate connection and tender talk at the station of hiddenness, the prayer of present vision at the station of the spirit, the prayer of intimate communion at the station of secret, the prayer of presence at the station of the heart and the prayer of obedience and yielding at the station of the soul. Thus the sun's decline is the indication of the setting of the sun of unity from its even presiding upon the existence of the servant by means of pure annihilation. For there is no [obligation of] prayer in the state of this presiding [of the sun of unity], as prayer is a deed that requires existence and in this case the servant has no existence until he engages in prayer, as is mentioned in the interpretation of His words *and worship your Lord until Certainty comes to you* [Q. 15:99]. Do you not see that the lawgiver [Muhammad], peace be upon him, forbade prayer during the time of [the sun's] even presiding [in the sky]. But at the point of [the sun's] decline, if there falls a shadow of the servant's existence, whether it be upon his becoming veiled by creation at the point of separation after the union or upon subsistence at the point of separation after union, then prayer becomes obligatory, *until the dark*, of the night of the soul, *and the recital [of the Qur'an]*, at the dawn of the heart. Thus the first prayer and the most subtle is the prayer of intimate connection and tender talk, and the most excellent one is the prayer of present vision of the spirit, the one alluded to by [the words] 'the afternoon prayer', as is understood from 'the middle prayer', meaning the most excellent prayer, where He says, exalted be He: *Maintain the prayers and the middle prayer* [Q. 2:238]. The most revelatory and the lightest is the secret prayer through intimate communion at the first moment of being veiled by means of the manifestation of the heart, [and that is] because of the speed with which the moment for it passes. That is why it is preferred that one lightens the

recitation [of Qur'ānic passages] during the sunset prayer and others, since it is an indication of that [veiling?]. The prayer that is most repelling of Satan and the one that is most illuminating for a human's inner being is the prayer of the presence of the heart, the one suggested by [the phrase] 'the recital [of the Qur'ān] at dawn', since it takes place during the moment of the self-disclosures of the lights of the [divine] attributes and the of the coming down of the [divine] unveilings. That is why it is preferable that the congregation for the morning prayer be a substantial one and the preference for this prayer to be performed in congregation has been emphasised specifically as well as the lengthening of [Qur'ānic] recitation [during it]. God, exalted be He, says: *Verily the dawn recital is ever witnessed*, that is, it enjoys a presence, the presence of the angels of the night and those of the day, an allusion to the coming down of the attributes of the heart and their lights and the flight of the attributes of the soul and their disappearance. The [prayer that is the] strongest in making the soul stand firm and become obedient is the prayer of the soul for reassurance and steadfastness, which is why it is recommended practice (*sunna*) according to what has been understood as a sign for that in terms of the [late] evening prayer that one enters into silence thereafter until [the time for] sleep, except if it is to remember God. If there should be the possibility that Satan might cast his evil whispers, it is recommended that one recite aloud, as in the prayer of the soul, that of the heart and of the secret in order to drive [him] away; but at the station of the spirit and hiddenness, he has no way in, which is why one is commanded to recite inaudibly.

[17:79] *And for a part of the night, keep vigil therewith*, in other words, single out some part of the night for vigil devotion, *as a supererogatory [devotion] for you*, as an addition to what has been specifically prescribed in your case, since that constitutes the indicator of the station of the soul and for that reason it is recommended that this [station] is singled out for additional acts of obedience since this station is in extra need of prayer when compared with all of the other stations, as he [the Prophet] himself acknowledged: 'All the more reason for me to be a thankful servant!' *It may be that your Lord will raise you to a praiseworthy station*, that is, to a station which everyone is obliged to praise, which is the station of the sealing of sanctity upon the appearance of the Mahdī. For the seal of prophethood is a praiseworthy station from one aspect, namely, the fact that it is the sealing of prophethood; but it is also no praiseworthy from another aspect which is that of the seal of sanctity — from this [latter] perspective, he [the Prophet] is at the station of praising: when the sealing of sanctity is complete, then will he be at a station that is praiseworthy from every aspect.

[17:80] *And say: 'My Lord, make me enter*, into the presence of the unity at the source of the union, *with a veritable entrance*, an entrance that is virtuous and pleasing [to You], [one] without the defect of the deviating eye that turns its attention to another, or the insolence of the manifestation of I-ness or the blemish of duality; *and bring me*



*out*, into the multiplicity upon the return to differentiation by means of the existence that is bestowed by [You] the Truth, *with a veritable departure*, a departure that is virtuous and pleasing [to You], [one] without the defect of variegation through inclination to the soul or the attributes of such [variegation], or misguidance after right guidance by swerving from the road of uprightness and deviating from the customary practices of equity towards injustice such as the temptation of David [cf. 38:24]. *And grant me from Yourself a favourable authority*, a definitive argument that brings victory, by making [me] steadfast and [granting me] fixity in such a way that I become in [all] things through You during the state of subsistence after annihilation and not through my soul, as he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, once said: '[O God] do not entrust me to my soul, not even for a blink of an eye'. Or [it means grant me from Yourself] might and power that is vanquishing through You by which I might fortify Your religion and make it prevail over all other religions.

[17:81] *And say: 'The Truth has come*, that is to say, the firm necessary existence that belongs to [God] the Truth, the one which cannot be changed or substituted, *and falsehood has vanished away*, that is to say, the contingent human existence that is subject to annihilation, change and disappearance. *Truly falsehood*, that is, contingent existence, *is ever bound*, to perish from the outset and [is] not something that is fixed and is exposed [by chance] to annihilation and thus perishes. Rather, what is evanescent is evanescent from pre-eternity and what is ever-subsisting is ever-subsisting and does not disappear. It is that we have veiled ourselves by a false and corrupt illusion which has been removed.

[17:82] *And We reveal*, of the Gathering Qur'ānic Intellect<sup>105</sup> in stages, the stars of the differentiations of the Discriminating Intellect, one star at a time, [revealing these] to the existence that derives from [Him] the Truth in accordance with the manifestation of the attributes. In other words, We detail what in your essence is undifferentiated and hidden into manifest exteriorised differentiations as a cure for the ailments of the hearts of those who are prepared, those who have faith in the Unseen from among your community, [ailments] such as ignorance, doubt, hypocrisy, blindness of the heart, rancour, spite, envy and their like and thus cleanse them, and as a mercy that will procure for them perfections and virtues and adorn them with wisdoms and gnoses; *though it only increases the evildoers*, those who have diminished their preparednesses with vices and evil veils, who have defrauded their shares of perfections by means of corporeal configurations and ego-centric attributes, *in loss*, by increasing the manifestation of their souls through their attributes, as [is the case] with [their] denial, obduracy, arrogance, unyieldingness, pretence for show and hypocrisy, [all of] which is added to their doubt, ignorance, blindness and erring.

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<sup>105</sup> See Kāshānī's commentary, above, at Q. 3:3 and note thereto.

[17:83] *And when We are gracious to man*, with a manifest grace, *he is disregarding*, since he halts with his soul and his body and because corporeal faculties are finite and as such do not contemplate affairs that are infinite that can occur by means of a grace or the rejecting of it when it is not forthcoming and all else; and he only sees what is immediate and waxes in arrogance because his soul has gained mastery over his heart and because he has manifested himself in his I-ness and his pharaonic insolence. Thus he becomes distant from the Truth [as he stands] on the side of the soul and he turns himself away, rejective. Likewise [he acts] on the side of evil when despair afflicts him, since he is veiled from the Powerful and His power. Were he to perceive with the eye of insight, he would witness God's power, exalted be He, in both situations and would become certain in the first situation that gratitude is what binds [one] to graces, and in the second [situation] that patience is what averts misfortunes and he would then give thanks and be patient and would come to realise that it is the Gracious One who has determined [things either way] and he would not, out of arrogance or insolence, be disregarding upon [receiving] a grace, out of fear that it might disappear, but [he would be] regarding of the Gracious One and would not despair in misfortune out of anxiety and exasperation, fully hopeful that it will be lifted, mindful as he would then be of the Trier.

[17:84] *Say: 'Everyone acts according to his [own] character*, that is, [according to] his makeup and his predominant natural disposition in his station. Thus the one whose station is the soul and whose character is the requirements of its [his soul's] natural traits, he will do what we have mentioned in the way of being disregarding and despairing. The one whose station is the heart and whose character is the virtuous temperament he will exercise gratitude and patience in accordance with its requirements; *and your Lord knows best who is better guided as to the way'*, from among [all] doers, the one who does good as entailed by the temperament of the heart and the one who does evil as entailed by the nature of the soul and He will recompense both in accordance with their deeds.

[17:85] *And they will question you concerning the Spirit. Say: 'The Spirit is of the command of my Lord*, not from the world of creation so as to enable one to define it for the exoterics, those preoccupied with bodies, whose perception does not go beyond sense and what is sensory, seeking similarities with what they have felt and [seeking] descriptions. Rather, It [the Spirit] belongs to the world of the command, that is, [the world] of origination, which is the world of essences that are disengaged from primordial matter and of substances that are sanctified from shape, colour, direction and whereness. Therefore you are unable to perceive It, you who are veiled by engendered being, by the shortcoming of your perception and your knowledge with regard to It. *And of knowledge you have not been given except a little'*, namely, knowledge of sensory

things, which is [a] trivial and paltry [quantity] in comparison to the knowledge of God, exalted be He, and [that of] those who are deeply rooted in knowledge.

[17:86] *And if We willed We could take away what We have revealed to you*, by means of obliteration at the locus of annihilation or veiling after unveiling through variegation. *Then you would not find in respect thereof any guardian for yourself against Us*, to act as guardian [for you] against Us by returning [what We take away],

[17:87] *[it is] only*, simply a tremendous mercy specific to you from Our extreme solicitude [of you], that which is the highest of the levels of the Merciful's mercy, charged by God, exalted be He, with the effusion of complete perfection upon him [the Prophet]. In other words, were We to disclose Ourselves in Our Essence, you would not find revelation, nor your essence, unless We disclosed Ourselves in the attribute of Mercy and Our Name the Merciful, in which case it [your existence] would be and you would find revelation. Likewise if We were to disclose Ourselves in the attribute of Majesty, you would be veiled from revelation and gnosis. *Truly His favour*, through revelation and Lordly instruction after the bestowal of existence derived from [Him] the Truth, *is ever great to you*, from pre-eternity.

[17:88] *Say: 'Verily, should mankind and jinn come together to produce the like of this Qur`ān, they could not produce the like thereof*, since the perfect preparedness that bears it is specific to you and you are the pole of the world: what overflows from you is sprinkled over them and so they are unable to produce the like thereof, nor are they capable of bearing it.

[17:89] It is because of this meaning that most people refuse all except, *disbelief*, and [why] they requested physical signs that correspond to their preparednesses and [capacities of] perception, such as the causing of springs to gush forth from the ground, or [the request of] a garden of date-palms and vines, or the causing of the heaven to fall upon them in pieces or [for him to] ascend into it and to bring angels [down] or any of the impossibilities that can be imagined. They received the response of His words:

[17:95] *Say: 'Had there been in the earth angels, walking [and living] secure*: in other words, it is not possible for the angels to descend into the earth when they are disengaged souls with angelic configurations. Indeed, were they to descend they would only do so in embodied forms, as He has said *And had We appointed him an angel, We would assuredly have made him a man, and We would have assuredly confused for them what they are [already] confusing* [Q. 6:9]. For otherwise, you would not be able to perceive them and would remain upon your repudiation [of the Messenger]. And if they were embodied, you would not believe them to be angels. In other words, with you, in both situations, it is repudiation, nay [it is the same with you] whatever the situation, just as a bat will [always] repudiate the light of the sun.

[17:97] *And be whom God guides*, as entailed by the pre-eternal solicitude in the original primordial nature, with His light, *be is rightly guided*, specifically, to the exclusion of all others, *and be whom He sends astray*, by withholding that light from him — *you will not find for them*, [any] helpers to guide him, *besides Him*, or to preserve him against His vanquishing. *And We shall assemble them on the Day of Resurrection on their faces*, that is, with their head lowered in humiliation, because of their attraction to the lower aspect; or [We shall assemble them] according to the existences and essences upon which they had been in this world, as in when he [the Prophet] said, ‘As you lived you shall die and as you died you shall be resurrected’. For the face represents the essence when it exists together with all of its accidents and concomitants. In other words [you shall be assembled] in [your] original condition, without anything additional or anything diminished, *blind*, to guidance, just as they were in the first life, *dumb*, [unable] to speak the truth because of their failure to perceive the meaning intended by speech, since they do not possess hearts with which to understand or comprehend. So how can what has not been understood be expressed? *and deaf*, [unable] to hear anything rational, also because of their lack of understanding. Thus the necessitating factor for guidance has no effect on them, neither by way of understanding from God, exalted be He, through inspiration, nor by means of hearing the speech of people, nor by way of insight through taking heed; [*their abode shall be Hell*] — *whenever it abates, We shall intensify for them the blaze*: this is similar to His words *as often as their skins are consumed, We shall replace them with other skins* [Q. 4:56], nay it is rhetorically more powerful. The reason for that [intensification] is their veiling of themselves from Our attributes, specifically, [from] Our power to resurrect [them] and because of their denial of that [power]: they denied [it] instead of inferring [that] power from the creation of the heavens and the earth.

[17:100] *Say: ‘If you possessed the treasuries of my Lord’s mercy, you would surely withhold [them]*, because of your halting with the attributes of your souls, [attributes] one of the concomitants of which is innate avarice, since their [faculty of] perception is confined to what is perceived through the sense of restricted material matters and [because] these [souls] are veiled from the endless blessings and the all-embracing unceasing mercy, which can only be perceived when the [eye of] insight is adorned with the light of guidance such that one fears that it should come to an end or be cut off.

[17:101] [*And verily We gave Moses*] *nine manifest signs*: allusion has been made to these in *sūrat al-Hijr* [Q. 15:87].

[17:105] *With the truth have We revealed it*: in other words, We only revealed the Qur’ān after the total elimination of the Prophet’s humanness, blessings and peace be upon him, at the station of annihilation and extinction of temporally originated beings from the face of eternity, and [only after] the scattering of the darkness of contingency from the august glories of the Necessary Subsisting Face at the second separation so

that there might be an existential locus for it [the Qur'ān]. Hence its revelation was only the manifestation of the judgements of differentiations from the source of union upon the differentiated locus of manifestation. Thus its revelation was with the truth from the Truth upon the Truth. Its revelation with the truth, according to this interpretation, is like when they say 'it came down to [stop over at] such and such [a place]' meaning 'he stopped over there', provided that the second [preposition] *bi* is adverbial, as when you say 'I stopped over in Baghdad', with the first [*bi*] being a circumstantial qualifier, in other words, that [it was revealed] fully garbed in the truth, meaning one of two things: either with the truth, as in the opposite of falsehood, that is to say, with the facts [of reality] and wisdom, or with the Truth who is God, exalted be He; in other words, that it was revealed with His attribute, which is the truth;

[17:106] *And [it is] a Qur'ān that We have divided*, according to the manifestation of the preparednesses of manifestation loci that entail the reception of it in a way commensurate with states, welfares and attributes, as we have mentioned with regard to His words *and if We had not made you stand firm* [Q. 17:74].

[17:107] *Say: 'Believe in it or do not believe:* in other words, your existences are tantamount to non-existence from Our point of view. The purpose of this [Qur'ān] is not to guide you since your hearts are [already] imprinted [with disbelief], having no place with God or in existence since you are devotees of the land of contingent existence, bereft of entific essence. It is those who have knowledge who are considered here, those who possess existence before God in the world of subsistence, those who are [ever] the exemplars in the [revealed] messages. See how they are when it is recited to them and when they hear it: *they fall down*, that is, they yield to it, acknowledge it and know the truth of it by virtue of their knowledge of it and their familiarity with it through the luminosity of [their] preparedness and correspondence to it and through the light of their perfection, by virtue of their disengagement and their knowledge that it is a promised book from God and that it could only be it [the Qur'ān] when they found it to correspond to what they had believed out of certainty, as true belief can only be one;

[17:109] *and it increases them in humility'*, by making them [spiritually] more pliant and more yielding to His judgement, because they are affected by it and because of their virtuous receptivity in accepting it.

[17:110] *Say: 'Invoke God*, to annihilation in the Essence that comprehends all attributes, *or invoke the Compassionate One*, to annihilation in the attribute which is the mother of all attributes: *whichever*, of these two stations you seek, you are not an existent there, nor do you have any remnant or name or entity or vestige, since [the name] the Compassionate One (*al-Raḥmān*) is a name that is valid only for that Essence and that attribute, namely, the Mercy of the Compassionate One (*al-Raḥmān*) cannot be established for any other than that [Essence] and so it does not require the existence

of a remnant, which is distinct from all of the other names and attributes; *to Him belong the Most Beautiful Names*', all of them in these two stations and not to you. *And do not be loud*, in the prayer of presential vision by manifesting the attribute of prayer from your soul so that then insolence and I-ness are called to manifest themselves; *nor be silent*, totally so that the call for obliteration is then made in the locus of annihilation without the return to the station of subsistence in which case no one will be able to follow your example; *but seek between that a way*: [this is] an indication of [the necessity for] uprightness and [for] adhering to a conduct full of equity in the world of multiplicity and cleaving to the straight path through the Truth.

[17:111] *And say: 'Praise be to God*: in other words, manifest the divine perfections and the attributes of the Compassionate One which can only belong to the Essence of the [exclusive] Unity, *Who has neither taken a son*, [Who] in other words has never been a cause for an existent of His genus since the effect [of that cause] would necessarily be in need of Him, contingent in essence and non-existent in reality: how then can such be of the same genus as One who is Existent in truth and who is Necessary by His very Essence from every aspect; *nor has He*, anyone equal to Him in terms of the power of His subjugation and [His] kingdom, such as a partner in sovereignty, for otherwise they would share in the necessity of existence and [that] of reality, in which case each one of them would necessarily have to be distinguished from the other but in a matter other than the necessity of reality and so they would have to be composite, in which case they would both be contingent and not necessary [beings]. In addition, if neither of them enjoyed effective agency independent of the other, then neither of them would be a god. But if one of them possessed independence to the exclusion of the other, then that one would be the god and not the other, and he would thus have no partner. If they both possessed that independence, then two independent causative factors would have combined in one effect if they were to act simultaneously [which is absurd]: otherwise, one of the two would be the god but not the other, whether the one is satisfied with the act of the other or not; *nor has He [taken] any ally out of weakness*', that is to say, He does not have any assistant, whether [functioning] as a cause or a partial cause that might empower Him or help Him against the weakness of reaction and non-existence, or else He would not be a Necessary God, but rather a contingent: so that you might be a lover who subsists through Him and not through your soul. *And magnify Him*, above that He should be confined to one attribute instead of another or one form as opposed to another or that any of these deficiencies should attach themselves to Him and restrict Him to a specific existence: blessed and exalted be He above that greatly, *with magnifications*. His might cannot be estimated nor His quintessence be fathomed since there is nothing other than Him that surpasses Him or can be attributed to Him, nay, nothing of all that can be conceptualised or rationally understood. None other than

Him can be magnified in this way and God the Truth is the One who grants success [to correct knowledge].

## [18] al-Kahf

### *In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful:*

[18:1] *Praise be to God [alone], Who has revealed to His servant the Book:* God, exalted be He, praises Himself by the tongue of differentiation in consideration of the union insofar as He is described as revealing the Book which incorporates the meaning of the union into the form of the differentiation. Hence He is the Praiser and the Praised at the level of differentiation and that of union. Praise is the manifestation of the divine perfections and the attributes of beauty and majesty upon the Muḥammadan essence considered from the perspective of the ascension after singling him out for Himself by [His] pre-eternal solicitude alluded to in the genitive construction in His saying ‘[to] His servant’ (*‘abdihi*). That [singling out] entailed making his [Muḥammad’s] entity pre-eternally receptive to nondelimited perfection from His effusion and the depositing of the all-comprehensive Book in him in potentiality, which is the perfect preparedness. The revealing to him of the Book is the exteriorisation of these realities from what lies latent<sup>106</sup> within the union of the [inclusive] unity onto that human locus of manifestation. In reality the two are reflections of each other when considering the descent, the ascension and the sending down [of the revelation] as praise from God, exalted be He, to His Prophet, since the significations that are latent in the unseen of the Unseen, that which has not been revealed to his heart, he is not able to praise God in the way that He ought to be praised and so what God has not praised does not praise God, but His praise praises Him, as he [the Prophet] said, ‘I cannot enumerate praise of You in the way that You praise Yourself. First, He praised Himself at the source of the union, considered from the point of view of differentiation, then reflected that by saying, ‘Praise be to God’; **and He has not allowed for him**, that is, for His servant, **any crookedness**, that is to say, any deviation or inclination to the other, as He has said [elsewhere]: *The eye did not deviate, nor did it go beyond [the bounds]* [Q. 53:17]. In other words, he [Muḥammad] did not see the other during his presential vision.

[18:2] *[a servant] upright*, that is, He made him upright as he was commanded in His words: *so remain upright as you have been commanded* [Q. 11:112]. The meaning [of this] is that He made him an affirmer of the Oneness, annihilated in Him, not veiled in his presential vision by the other, nor by his own soul — since this too constitutes a contingent other, but upright in the state of subsistence, as He has said: *Truly those who say, ‘Our Lord is God!’ and then remain upright* [Q. 41:30]. Or [it means] that He has made him the sustainer (*qayyim*) of the affairs of [His] servants and of their guidance, since perfection is contingent upon perfectedness, for he [the Prophet], blessings and

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<sup>106</sup> Read *makman* here instead of *mumkin*, since what follows (*al-kāmina fī ghayb al-ghayb*) suggests this. In reality the two significations are very close.



peace be upon him, having finished making his soul upright (*taqwīm*) and cleansing it, the souls of his community were assigned the station (*maqām*) of his soul and so he was commanded to make these upright and to cleanse them. It is for the same signification that Abraham, may God's blessings be upon him, was called 'a community [unto himself]' [cf. Q. 16:120]. This capacity to make [others] upright, that is, to sustain the guidance of people is subsumed by the very uprightness to which he has been commanded in reality, **to warn**: this [verb] is connected to the [grammatical] operator (*āmil*) of *qayyiman* ('upright'): in other words, He has charged him with the [making upright of the] affairs of servants in order that he should warn, **of severe distress**: the omission of the first direct object is intended to express generality because no one, neither believer nor unbeliever, is exempt from distress, as God, exalted be He, has said: 'Warn the sincere righteous that I am a jealous One and give good tidings to sinners that I am Forgiving'. For distress represents His vanquishing, which is why He has aggrandised it by the use of the indefinite [form] — in other words, [warn them of] a distress that befits His tremendousness and His might — [and why] He has qualified this [distress] with [the term] 'severe' and specified it by saying that it is: **from Him**. Vanquishing is of two kinds. One kind is pure vanquishing, outer and inner vanquishing, such as the one that specifically afflicts those who are veiled by idolatrous association. Another kind is vanquishing in its outer [manifest] aspect but graciousness in its inner [hidden] aspect. Such is [divine] graciousness, as the Commander of the Believers, 'Alī [b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, said: 'Glory be to Him whose disfavour towards His enemies is severe just as His grace is all-embracing and whose mercy towards His friends is all-embracing just as His disfavour remains severe'. An example of the latter type is the vanquishing that is specific to the affirmers of Oneness from among the people of annihilation. He has given the warning to all in a nondelimited way in order to alert [all], but then differentiated between grace and vanquishing by making them dependent on attributes and merit, hence He says: **and to bring good tidings to the believers**, that is, the affirmers of Oneness, since they constitute the counterpart to the idolaters who said that God had taken to Himself a son, **who perform righteous deeds**, that is, the enduring good deeds and virtues because the fair reward pertains to the garden of effects and acts which is merited by deeds. Know also that the warning and the good tidings, both of which belong to the perfection that is concomitant of his [the Prophet's] being watcher (*qayyim*) over the two [groups], are the effect and result of the two divine attributes of vanquishing and graciousness the locus of preparedness for the reception of which within the soul of a servant are wrath and passionate desire. For the servant only prepares to receive these [divine attributes] by means of the two attributes of [his] wrath and passionate desire and their annihilation, just as he is only prepared for the two virtues of courage and self-restraint when those attributes are present: when these [wrath and passionate desire] are annihilated, the two [divine attributes] take their place, because each of the two is the

shadow of one of those two [divine attributes] and disappears with their actualisation. Thus when the heart has imbibed these two [divine attributes] and the assumption of them as character traits has been perfected there ensues from vanquishing the warning, upon the meriting of the locus as a result of disbelief and idolatry and [there ensues] from graciousness the good tidings, upon the meriting by means of faith and righteous deeds, since effusion only takes place when the locus has acquired the meriting [of it]. [18:5] *They do not have, in this any knowledge, nor did their fathers:* in other words, they have no knowledge regarding that claim [about God having a son], rather it issues from extreme ignorance and [blind] imitation of their fathers and not from any knowledge or certainty, a fact which is reinforced by His words: *Dreadful is the word*, in other words, how great [in injustice] is that statement, *that comes out of their mouths:* in their hearts there can be no such meaning, since it is impossible and has no meaning. For certain knowledge testifies that the sublime necessary existence is unique in essence and cannot be likened to defective contingent existence. A son is the like of his father in terms of species and his equal in terms of strength. But presential vision of the essence stipulates that creation will be annihilated in the Truth and the effect in the Witnessed, whereupon there will be nothing there except Him and no other, let alone [that there should be] a like or a son, as one of them has said:

‘In this existence, even if outwardly it as well as your life should be multitudinous outwardly, there is only you’.

*They speak nothing but lies*, since rational proof and the consciousness of the tasting in the presential vision are both in accord on the impossibility of that.

[18:6] *Yet it may be that you will consume*, destroy, *your soul*, because of the intensity of the ecstasy [?] and grief over their turning away and rejection, and that is because compassion for God’s creatures and mercifulness towards them is one of the concomitants and results of the love of God. And since he [Muḥammad], may God bless him and grant him peace, was the beloved of God, and one of the concomitants of his being beloved [by Him] was his love of God — as in His saying *whom He loves and who love Him* [Q. 5:54] and the stronger his love for the Truth, the greater his compassion and mercifulness towards His creatures, since compassion towards them constituted the shadow of his love of God — so his sympathy for them was great, for they are [to him] as his children and his kin, nay, as his organs and limbs in the real presential vision, which is why he was extremely grief-stricken over them, so much so that he almost destroyed himself; and so he also realised that when a lover fortifies himself with his Beloved through the continuing effort to [achieve] arrival [at knowledge of God], the acceptance of Him becomes manifest in the hearts by virtue of God’s love of him [the Prophet]. Hence when they failed to believe in the Qur’ān, he [the Prophet] became conscious of a remnant of his soul and sensed a deficiency in his state whereupon he was overcome by ecstasy and resolved to vanquish his soul totally in

pursuit of that goal. That was because of his extreme compassion for them and his perfect manners before God, for he attributed their non-belief to the weakness of his state and not to the lack of preparedness on their part, which is why He then gave him solace with the words:

[18:7] *Truly We have made*, in other words, do not be grieved by them, for it is none of your concern if they should all be destroyed. We bring forth all causes from non-existence into existence in order to try [mankind] and then annihilate these without any injustice or diminution. Or [it means] We have made all that is on the earth of the body in the way of the soul, its pleasures and passionate desires, and the faculties of its attributes, its perceptions and exigencies, *as an adornment*, for it, so that it might become manifest who is the strongest in vanquishing it and disobeying its vain desires in seeking to please Me and who is most capable in opposing it in order to be in accord with Me.

[18:8] *And indeed We shall turn*, by means of Our self-disclosure and the self-disclosure of Our attributes, *all that is therein*, in the way of its attributes, lifeless, like a level land without vegetation. In other words, We shall annihilate it and its attributes through real death or through natural death and We shall not be concerned thereby. Nay:

[18:9] *or did you think that the Companions of the Cave and the Inscription were a [unique] marvel from among Our signs?* In other words, if you have witnessed such origination and annihilation, then the state of the Companions of the Cave is not a marvel from among Our signs. Rather this [origination and annihilation] is more marvelous. Know that the Companions of the Cave are the perfect seven,<sup>107</sup> those who always uphold the command of the Truth, the ones through whom the world is sustained and of whom no age is [ever] devoid. [Their number] is the same as and corresponds to the number of the planets, the seven orbiting ones. And just as God, exalted be He, has disposed these to manage the order of the world of form, as alluded to in His words, *By those that race forward, and by those that direct the affair* [Q. 79:4-5], according to some commentaries, so He delegated [the management of] the order of the world of meaning and the perfecting of the order of [the world of] form to seven souls from among the former [generations], each one of whom is related, in accordance with formal existence, to one of these [planets]. The pole (*quṭb*) belongs to the sun; the Cave is the inner aspect of the body, while al-Raqīm ('inscription') is its outer aspect,

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<sup>107</sup> According to Ibn 'Arabī, "perfect man possesses two kinds of perfection, one related to his essential reality as a form of God, and the other to the various attributes and qualities which he manifests in his specific functions in this world and the next" (Chittick 1989: 366). In respect of that 'essential' perfection, perfect man manifests the all-comprehensive name Allāh. In respect of his, other, 'accidental' perfection he manifests perfections of knowledge and character the origin of which goes back to an individual name of God; cf. I. Goldziher (H. J. Kissling), 'Abdāl', *EI2*, I, 94; also Hussein La-Shay' (tr. Farzin Negahban), 'Abdāl', *EI3*, I, 303.

which has been engraved with the forms of the senses and organs — if it is to be explained as [referring to] the [Preserved] Tablet wherein their names have been inscribed (*ruqqimat*); or [al-Raqīm is] the corporeal world, if [al-Raqīm is] taken to be the name of the valley wherein lies the mountain and [its] cave; or [it represents] the animal soul, if [al-Raqīm is] taken to be the name of the dog; or [it represents] the upper world, if [al-Raqīm is] taken to be the name of the town from which they came, [all of these interpretations] being in accordance with the varying opinions of the commentaries. Among these [seven souls] are the seven well-known prophets that were sent during the [various] generations and eras, even though each of these prophets followed a [separate] Remembrance. They are Adam, Enoch (*Idrīs*), Noah, Abraham, Moses, Jesus as well as Muḥammad, blessings and peace be upon them, since he [Muḥammad] is the seventh one, the one designated for the miracle of the splitting of the moon [cf. Q. 54:1],<sup>108</sup> that is to say, [the miracle of] its being cleft from him because of his having appeared in the period of the sealing of prophethood and [because] through him the divine religion has been perfected, as alluded to by him in his statement: ‘Time has come full circle back to how it was the day God created the heavens and the earth’. For the one who comes at the later stages in terms of time and manifestation, that is, [in terms of] sensory existence, is the one who secures the attributes of the All and their perfections, much like the human in relation to all the other animals. That is why he said, ‘It is as though the edifice of prophethood is complete except for a single brick the space for which still remains. I am that brick’. The divine sages of ancient Persia were all of the view that in terms of the descending order, the irradiations of the levels of intellects and spirits, according to their school of thought, intensify, such that the later the level the more ample and the greater that share of the irradiations of the Truth, [of] His lights and [of] the august glories of His countenance and [of] the irradiations of the lights of intermediaries. Likewise is the case with [order in terms of] time. Thus he is the one who combines and encompasses the attributes of the All and their perfections, the one who comprises their specific qualities and their meanings in addition to the perfection that is specific to him and concomitant of the configuration of all-comprehensiveness, just as he [himself] said, ‘I was sent to complete the noble character traits’. From this becomes his precedence over them [the other prophets] in terms of honour and merit is apparent and considered from the aspect that Abraham, peace be upon him, was the locus for the manifestation of the Essential and Greatest affirmation of Oneness and the middle one in chronological sequence, being equal to the station of the sun in terms of [his] level, he was also the pole of prophethood and all [of the prophets] were obliged to follow him even if he was not manifest for those who came after him chronologically, [this] being similar to the connectedness of the six planets to its [the sun’s] orbit, but not like the

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<sup>108</sup> See Kāshānī’s commentary at Q. 54:1.

moon. Thus in reality Muḥammad, may God bless him and grant him peace, followed him. Know that the spirits have designated levels in their world and ranks according to a hierarchy as well as varying preparednesses configured from pre-eternity as result of the pure original solicitude and holiest effusion. Thus those of the first rank are the foremost, the isolated individuals who are brought near, the beloved ones who are singled out for His solicitude and His preceding generosity, who recognise one another by His light and love one another through Him. The rest [of those spirits] differ in degrees and recognise or do not recognise one another in accordance with the proximity or distance between these [degrees]. Accordingly, those [spirits] that recognise one another become familiar with one another and those that do not recognise one another differ, all the way [down] to the last of the ranks. Thus these [spirits] have fixed points and firm roots in the upper world. So, upon their attachment to bodies, the degrees of their perfections [necessarily] and the goals of their felicities vary in accordance with the capital each [spirit] possesses in the way of its initial preparedness, the one specific to it from its point of origin since pre-eternity, as he [the Prophet], blessings and peace be upon him, said, ‘People are like ores, such as gold and silver ores’. [Thus continue the degrees of rank] until the degrees in terms of loftiness terminate with annihilation in the affirmation of the Oneness of the Essence. Considered thus then, Muḥammad, peace be upon him, is the very entity of Adam, nay, the very entity of all of the seven [souls]. Similarly, considering that he [Muḥammad] is the one who combines [all of] their attributes — as related in the case of Abū Yazīd [Baṣṭāmī], may God’s mercy be upon him, who when asked, ‘Are you among the seven?’, said, ‘I am [all of] the seven’ — and considering the loftiness of his level and his station, his eternal precedence and the high degree of his perfection and merit, he [Muḥammad] is the most eternal, the first and the most excellent of all of them, as he himself once said, ‘The first thing that God created was my light and I was a prophet while Adam was still water and clay’. Consequently, he precedes them in terms of level, loftiness, honour and merit, succeeding them [only] in terms of time. He is them from the point of view of the mystery and essential unity with the result that their differing and varying spirits, hearts and souls does not contradict their being one in reality. Likewise, their separation in time does not contradict their togetherness from pre-eternity to eternity and at the source of the union, just as He has said *Those messengers some We have preferred above others* [Q. 2:253] but also said *we make no distinction between any of them* [Q. 3:84].

It is also possible that by ‘the Companions of the Cave’ is meant the spiritual aspects of man, those that subsist after the decay of the body. As for the statement of those who said ‘they were three’, that is an allusion to the spirit, the intellect and the heart, while the dog represents the soul that adheres to the entrance of the cave. As for those who said ‘they were five’, that is an allusion to the spirit, the heart, the considerative intellect, the practical intellect and the holy faculty that belongs to prophets, which for

others is [the faculty of] reflection. As for those who said ‘they were seven’, then those five in addition to the mystery and concealment. But God knows best.

[18:10] *When the youths took refuge in the Cave*, that is, the Cave of the body by becoming attached to it; *they said*, by the tongue of [their] state: ‘*Our Lord! Give us from Yourself*, that is, from the storehouses of Your mercy, which are Your Most Beautiful Names, *mercy*, perfection that corresponds to our preparedness and is entailed by it, *and remedy for us our affair*, one in which we find ourselves separated from the upper world and plunged down to the lower world to seek perfection, *by way of rectitude*’, as a way of being upright before You by wayfaring along Your path and orienting ourselves to Your Side. In other words, they sought [from God] cognitive and practical perfection by corporeal conjunction and attachment to the instruments and causes of perfection.

[18:11] *So We smote their ears*, that is, We put them to sleep the sleep of obliviousness to their world and their perfection, a heavy sleep from which neither a sentry’s whistle nor the call of a summoner with news arouses them, in the Cave of the body, *for years*, numerous, that is, many [years] or a [specific] number [of years], that is to say, a few, being the period of their immersion in the governing of the body and their being engulfed in the sea of physical nature, preoccupied with it, oblivious to what lies beyond it of their world until the time [arrives] of the attaining of true maturity and of voluntary or natural death, as has been said, ‘Mankind are asleep: at death, they awaken’.

[18:12] *Then We sent them forth*, We aroused them from the sleep of obliviousness by their rising from the lying-place of the body and by their knowledge of God and their disengaged souls, *that We might know*, that is, so that Our knowledge might become manifest in them as loci of manifestation or in the loci of manifestation of others from among all people [as to], *which of the two parties*, that differed regarding the duration of their tarrying [in the Cave] and [regarding] the calculating of its end, whether those who specified the period of time or those who left the knowledge of that to God [were the better of the two]. For people differ over the period of occultation (*ghayba*). Some say that one of them emerges every one thousand years, which amounts to a year with God, because of His statement: *And truly a day with your Lord is like a thousand years of your counting* [Q. 22:47]. Some say every seven hundred years or every one hundred years, which is part of a day, as they said: *we have tarried a day, or part of day* [Q. 18:19]. But the verifiers, who are correct, are the ones who leave the knowledge thereof to God, like those who said *Your Lord knows best how long you have tarried* [Q. 18:19], which is why the Messenger of God, may God bless him and grant him peace, did not specify the moment of the appearance of the Mahdī, peace be upon him, and said, ‘They are liars, those who [are given to] specify the moment [of his appearance]’.

[18:13] *They were indeed youths who believed in their Lord*, a cognitive faith of certainty by means of inference or unveiling, *and We increased them in guidance*, that is, [with] a guiding that helps [them] to arrive at the source of certainty and the station of witnessing through divine assistance.

[18:14] *And We fortified their hearts*: We strengthened them by causing them to endure the [spiritual] struggle with patience and We gave them courage to wage war against Satan, to resist the soul, to abandon corporeal familiars, sensory pleasures and to uphold the word of the affirmation of [His] Oneness, to deny the divinity of vain desire and to reject the worship of the idol of the body before the tyrant that is the commanding soul, without any concern for it, when it [that tyrannical soul] rebuked them for refraining from the worship of the deity of vain desire and the idol of the body and threatened them with poverty and ruin. For [indeed] the soul is given to call to the worship of that [false deity] and to being in accord therewith and to preparing the means for [the actualisation of] its [that deity's] shares, [the soul] also being given to incite fear in the heart of fear [itself] and of death. Or [it means] that We emboldened them to uphold the word of the affirmation of [His] Oneness and to make manifest the upright religion and to call to the Truth in the presence of every tyrant, who [in this case] was Docianus,<sup>109</sup> whose moment was like that of Nimrod, Pharaoh and Abū Jahl and their ilk from among those who followed their religion and over whom the commanding soul had acquired mastery so that they ended up worshipping vain desire, or those who, out of their insolence and the rebelliousness of their I-ness and their belligerence, claimed lordship without any concern, when he [the tyrant] rebuked them for abandoning the worship of a given idol, as was the habit of some of them, or [for abandoning the worship of] the idol of his own soul, just as the accursed Pharaoh said: *I do not know of any god for you other than me* [Q. 28:38] and *'I am your most high lord!'* [Q. 79:24].

[18:15] *These, our people*: an allusion to the commanding soul and its faculties. For every people have a deity whom they worship, [that deity] being what they desire and seek, and the soul worships vain desire, as in where He says: *Have you then seen him who has taken as his god his [own] vain desire* [Q. 45:23]. Or [it is an allusion] to the people who lived at the time when each of them had gone forth summoning to God, since whoever cleaves to something which he desires then he worships it. *Why [if what they claim is true] do they not bring regarding them*, that is, regarding their worship of them, their divinity, their effect and their existence, *some clear warrant?*, some clear proof: this is an indication of the corrupted nature of [their] practice and a rebuke to the effect that to establish a proof for the divinity of something other than God or for the effect and existence of such [a thing] is impossible, as He Himself has said: *These are*

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<sup>109</sup> Emperor Domitian (Titus Flavius Domitianus), who reigned 81-96 CE.

*nothing but names which you have named, you and your fathers. God has not revealed any warrant for them* [Q. 53:23]. In other words, these [things] are mere names without objects named [by those names], since they are nothing [in reality].

[18:16] *And when you withdraw from them*, that is, [when] you keep yourselves apart from your souls and their faculties by means of disengagement, *and from that which they worship except God*, in the way of their wishes and vain desires, *then take refuge in the Cave*, in the body, in order to deploy the corporeal instruments for the seeking of perfection by means of forms of knowledge and [righteous] deeds and be forsaken therein, broken and tamed, as if dead, by avoiding ego-centric movements, bestial whims and predatorial assaults. In other words, die a voluntary death: *Your Lord will reveal for you something of His mercy*, a true life through knowledge and gnosis, *and prepare for you in your affair some comfort*, some perfection which can be benefited from, by the manifestation of qualities of excellence and the rising of the lights of self-disclosures, so that you might take pleasure in the witnessings and enjoy perfections, as God says: *Why, is he who was dead, and We gave him life, and appointed for him a light by which to walk among people* [Q. 6:122]. And he [the Prophet], peace be upon him, said of Abū Bakr, may God be satisfied with him, ‘Whoever wants to behold a dead person walking upon the face of the earth, let him behold Abū Bakr’: in other words, one who is dead to himself, walking by means of God. Or [it means] when you withdraw from your people and their objects of worship that are other than God in the way of their differing demands, disparate goals, myriad vain desires and adopted idols, then take refuge in the Caves of your bodies and refrain from curious movements and from going forth in the footsteps of passionate desires; but cleave to acts of spiritual discipline and your Lord will reveal from His mercy an extra perfection, a strengthening and assistance by means of resources from the angelic realm and holy reinforcements, and He will grant you victory over them and prepare for you a religion and a way from which you can benefit as well as an acceptance so that creatures will find guidance through you to salvation.

In [their] taking refuge in the cave upon separating [from their people] there is another mystery that can be understood as the entry into the cave of the Mahdī when he has emerged and Jesus has descended. But God knows best. And in the revealing of a mercy [from God] and the preparation of a comfort in their affair upon the taking refuge in the cave there is an allusion to the fact that the mercy that is latent within their preparedness is only revealed upon their corporeal attachment and perfection through the configurations thereof.

[18:17] *And you might have seen the sun*, that is, the sun of the spirit, *when it rose*, that is, when it rose [in rank] by means of disengagement from the coverings of the body and [when] it emerged manifest from its [the body’s] horizons, inclining with them from the direction of the body, its [the spirit’s] inclination and love being for the



direction of the right, that is to say, the side of the holy world and the path of pious deeds such as acts of goodness, of merit, of virtue and obedience, the conduct of the pious, for the pious are the companions of the right; *and when it set*, that is, [when] it hurtles down into the abyss of the body and becomes veiled therein and disappears into its darkneses and recesses so that its light is extinguished, it crosses over them and leaves them while they remain on the left, that is to say, [on] the side of the soul and the path of evil deeds so that they become engrossed in acts of disobedience, misdeeds, evil and vices and [follow] the conduct of the profligate who are the companions of the left, *while they were in a cavern therein*, that is, in a wide space within their body which is the station of the soul and physical nature. For therein is an expanse in which the light of the spirit does not fall on them. Know also that the side of the heart that is adjacent to the spirit is a spot illumined by the light of the spirit and is called the intellect; it is this that summons to good and paves the way to heavenly inspiration. The side [of the heart] that is adjacent to the soul is dark because of the darkness of its attributes and is called the breast; this is the locus for the evil whisperings of Satan, as He has said *who whispers in the breasts of mankind* [Q. 114:5]. But when the spirit stirs and the heart turns its face to it, it [the heart] becomes illumined, is strengthened by the rational faculty that summons to, and causes yearning for, perfection and inclines to good and obedience. Yet if the soul stirs and the heart turns its face to it, it [the heart] is sullied and is veiled from the light of the spirit, while the intellect becomes dark and inclines to evil and disobedience. And in both states the angel turns to inspiration and satan to evil whisperings and they mix a righteous deed with an evil one. There is in the verse a subtlety, which is that He uses [the verb] ‘to incline away’ (*izwirār*) from the cave in the context of inclining to good and in the context of inclining to evil [He uses the verb] ‘cut across’ (*qarada*). That is because the spirit conforms with the heart along the path of good and commands it thereto and accords therewith, turning away from the side of the body and what this [side] conforms with, not according with it along the path of evil. Rather it cuts across it and separates from it while it is engrossed in the darkneses of the soul and those attributes of it that veil it from the light. This is an allusion to variegation in wayfaring. For as long as the wayfarer has not reached the station of fixity and remains in variegation, the soul manifests itself on him together with his attributes so that he becomes veiled from the light of the spirit before returning once again. *That*, namely, the rising of the light of the spirit and its disappearance, *is of God’s signs*, [the signs] through which the way is found and through which one arrives at Him and His guidance. *Whomever God guides*, by making him arrive at the station of the witnessing and granting him fixity therein, *he indeed is rightly guided*, in truth and in no other way, *and whomever He leads astray*, by veiling him from the light of His countenance, then there will be no one to guide him or direct him [to the right path]. Or it means, and whomever God guides to them [the

youths of the cave] and to the truth of their state [is truly guided], and whomever He leads astray, He will veil him from [the truth of] their state.

[18:18] *And you would have supposed them awake*, O you who is being addressed, on account of their eyes being open, their senses functioning and their voluntary animal movements, *though they were asleep*, in reality, in the slumber of obliviousness, with you seeing them [as though] looking at you while they are not in fact perceiving. *And We caused them to turn over to the right and to the left*, that is to say, at times We turn them towards the aspect of goodness and pursuit of qualities of excellence, and at others, towards the aspect of evil and what nature entails, *and their dog*, that is, their soul, *[lay] stretching its forelegs*, that is, with its irascible and appetitive faculties<sup>110</sup> unrolled, *on the threshold*, that is, in the courtyard of the body. He did not say, ‘and their dog [lay] asleep’, since it [their soul] did not sleep but stretched forth its twin faculties across the courtyard of the body, adhering to the latter and not parting with it. The right foreleg represents anger, since it is stronger, nobler and more receptive to the exigencies of the heart when it comes to the edification of it. The left one represents passionate desire (*shahwa*) on account of its weaker nature and its baseness. *If you had observed them*, that is, [observed] their disengaged realities and their brilliant states and the luminosity and brilliance which He has deposited in them and the might and splendour with which He has garbed them, *you would have turned away from them*, fleeing for your lack of belief in disengaged souls and their states and for your lack of preparedness to receive their perfections; or [it means] you would have turned away from them in order to flee from them and from their interactions (*mu‘amalāt*) on account of your inclination to sensory pleasures and matters of nature; *and you would have been filled with awe because of them*, [in awe] of their states and spiritual acts of self-discipline; or [it means] had you observed them after the arrival at perfection and [had you observed] their innermost secrets and their stations in the unity, you would have kept away from them and would have fled from their states and you would have been filled with awe of them because of the extent to which God has garbed them with His tremendousness and magnificence: and how, I ask you, can the temporally originated (*ḥadath*) compare with the eternal (*qidam*) and how can nonexistence (*‘adam*) encompass existence (*wujūd*)!

[18:19] *And thus it was that We aroused them*, meaning, just like that real arousal and spiritual revival did We arouse them, *that they might question one another*, that is, that they might seek [to discover] among one another the significations deposited in their preparednesses, the truths hidden within their essences, that they might become perfected by exteriorising these and bringing them out into actuality, which is the

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<sup>110</sup> These are the two basic powers of the animal soul that ensure its ability to face danger and to fight for its survival.

beginning of attentiveness, what the Sufis call vigilance (*yaqaza*). *One of them said, 'How long have you tarried?':* the interpretation of this has already been given, and it is the verifiers among them who were: *They*, who, *said, 'Your Lord knows best how long you have tarried. Now send one of you with this silver coin of yours to the city:* this was the time of their coming to perceive, their gaining [of knowledge] and their perfection. The silver coin represents the principle forms of knowledge which they possessed and which are not acquired, since it is through these [forms of knowledge] that mental truths are gained from the forms of true knowledge and [from] divine gnoses. The city represents is the locus for the coming together (*ijtimā'*), for companionship and training are unavoidable; or [it represents] the city of knowledge, as per his statement, peace be upon him, 'I am the city of knowledge and 'Alī is its gate'. As for the fact that they only sent one of them, that is because the perfection of all is not dependent upon instruction and learning. Nay, the more noble perfection is that of knowledge. And so it suffices for one to gain knowledge in place of the group and to [then] alert the remainder, as God, exalted be He, says: *Why should not a party of every section of them go forth so that they may become learned in religion and that they may warn their folk when they return to them* [Q. 9:122] *and let him see which is the purest food*, which of its inhabitants is the most goodly and most excellent in terms of knowledge and purer than meddlesomeness, idle talk and superficial things (*zawābir*) such as the art of contradiction and disputation and the like by which the soul cannot become stronger nor perfect itself, as in His saying *neither nourishing nor availing against hunger*. For knowledge is the nourishment of the heart, as food is for the body, and it is the true divine provision [Q. 88:7]. *Let him be careful*, when choosing the food [to buy] and the people to buy from, that is to say, let him choose the verifier with the pure soul, the one rightly-guided in his way, excellent in conduct, unpolluted in his inner heart (*sarīra*), the perfect and perfecting one, and not the meddling, superficial (*zabirī*), evil soul, who feigns knowledge and informs of what he does not possess, so that he [the former] might profit from his companionship and manifest his perfection by sitting with him and acquire perception through his knowledge and then in turn benefit us. Or: let him be careful in this matter lest an ignorant one become aware of your [spiritual] state and your [true] religion inadvertently; *and [let him] not make anyone*, from the veiled exotericists (*abl al-zābir*) or those deniers who dwell in the world of nature, *aware of you*. If we were to interpret 'the companions of the cave' as the spiritual faculties, then the one who has been sent [off to the city] represents reflection (*fīkr*), the city the locus of the coming together of the spiritual and egocentric faculties with nature; the purest food is the intellect as opposed to estimation, imagination and the senses, for every perceptible thing has a [specific] nourishment; the provision [he is sent for] is considerative knowledge in the case of both interpretations; and [it would also mean] '[let him] not make anyone', of the egocentric faculties, *aware of you*.

[18:20] *For indeed if they should come to prevail over*, that is, to overwhelm, *you, they will [either] stone you*, with the rocks of caprice and the exigencies of anger and passionate desire and the pursuit of pleasure and thus slaughter you by preventing you from your perfections; *or make you return to their creed*, by the prevailing [over you] of estimation and the victory of satan and the inclination to vain desire and the worship of graven images. According to the former interpretation then, [this means] the prevailing of the commonalty and the dominance of the veiled imitators<sup>111</sup> and the exaggerating traditionists,<sup>112</sup> as well as that of the engrained followers of falsehood. As for their stoning of the people of the truth and their call to these [latter] to their own [false] creed, that is apparent just as it had been during the time of God's Messenger, may God bless him and grant him peace.

[18:21] *And so it was that We disclosed them*: that is, in the very same way as that arousing and putting to sleep did We disclose their state to the prepared who are receptive to the guidance therein and to gnosis of their realities; *that they might know*, by means of their companionship and their guidance, *that God's promise*, of resurrection and recompense, *is true; and that, as for the Hour, there is no doubt concerning it. Behold they were disputing among themselves their affair*: that is, when the prepared seekers were disputing among themselves the matter of one's appointed final return, some of them were saying that resurrection specifically concerns disengaged spirits and not bodies. Some were saying that it concerns both spirits and bodies together; but when they observed them and came to know them, they realised that it [the final return] will be in both body and spirit and that the corporeal [resurrection of the] final return is true, *so they said, 'Build over them a building*, that is, when they [the sleepers] passed into death, they [the observers] said that, in the same manner that lodges (*khānqāh*), tombs (*mashhad*) and pilgrimage sites (*mazār*) are constructed over the perfected ones, those who enjoy [spiritual] propinquity to prophets and saints, such as Abraham, Muḥammad, 'Alī and all of the other prophets and saints, may God bless them all and grant them peace. *Their Lord knows them best*': these are the words of their followers from among their communities and those who follow their example. In other words, those [sleepers of the cave] are too eminent and too illustrious for anyone to know them other than those who die in God and who achieve spiritual realisation through Him, for He is most knowledgeable about them, as He has said, exalted be He: "My friends reside beneath my domes, and none knows them except Me". *Those who prevailed regarding their affair*, from among their companions and those who followed

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<sup>111</sup> Literally, those whose legal recourse was primarily to rely on the teachings of previous juristic authorities; for a full discussion, see N. Calder, 'taḳlīd', *EI2*.

<sup>112</sup> On the use of this term as a derogatory reference to the *aṣḥāb al-ḥadīth*, the traditionists, who promoted ḥadīth over all texts or arguments, regardless of content and provenance, see 'ḥashwiyya', *EI2*.

their affair seeking blessedness through them and through their site, *'We will verily set up over them, a place of worship'*, in which prayers can be performed.

[18:22] *They will say*, namely, the exotericists from among the People of the Book and the Muslims, those who have no [real] knowledge of [such] truths — and His saying 'guessing at random' (*rajman bi'l-ghayb*) means: throwing random guesses at what is unseen to them, in other words, out of speculation completely devoid of certainty, after where they say *'Three; their dog the fourth of them'*, and *'Five; their dog the sixth of them'*: the interpositioning of the *wāw* ('and') that indicates that the adjectival qualification combines inseparably with the qualified [noun] and that there is no [possible] number beyond between His words, *And they will say, 'Seven, and their dog the eighth of them'*, and His words *and none knows them except a few'* afterwards is proof that the true [number] was seven and nothing else. The 'few' are the verifiers whose opinion is that [they were seven]. If we were to interpret them as representing the spiritual faculties, then they will be the following: 1) The twin faculty of reason, the considerative and the cognitive; 2) reflection; 3) estimation; 4) imagination; 5) memory; 6) the *sensus communis*, called 'fantasia';<sup>113</sup> and 7) the dog representing the soul and the spirit in both interpretations. That explains what has been related from the Commander of the Believers [ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib], peace be upon him, where he said, 'They were seven, three [seated] to the right of the king and three [seated] to his left, with the seventh being the shepherd, the very owner of the dog'. If this report is sound, then that King was Decius, representing the [evil-] commanding soul; the three [seated] to his right with whom he would consult were the two rational faculties in addition to [the faculty of] reflection; the three [seated] to his left to whom he would delegate affairs (*istawzara*) were the imagination, estimation and memory; the shepherd was 'fantasia' the owner of the sheep of the senses. As for those who said that they [the sleepers] had been three, they intended the heart and the two rational faculties. As for those who said that they had been five, added to these [three] the faculties of reflection and estimation and left out the [faculty that is the] perceiver of forms and that of memory on account of their lack of [the power of] free disposal (*taṣarruf*) and each of the two functioning as a storage place. According to this [last] interpretation, the observing of the subsistence of the soul after the disintegration (*kbarāb*) of the body belongs to the group of verifiers from the divine presence; the 'disputing' represents the mutual attraction and struggle that takes place between the faculties as they vie to take possession of the body in which they are resurrected, which is the very 'building' they are commanded to build, the commanding ones being 'those who prevailed', the ones who said, 'We will verily set up over them a place of worship', in which shall prostrate [in worship], that is, shall be made compliant all of the faculties, the animal, the natural

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<sup>113</sup> [note needed on Ibn Sīnā's psychology of the senses and the imaginal faculty – Mulla Sadra]

and the egocentric. The ones commanded are the ones who were prevailed upon, the agents of the resurrected body. But God knows best.

[18:23] *And never say regarding something, 'I will indeed do that:* He disciplined him [the Prophet] by His divine edification after prohibiting him from 'contending' (*mumārāt*) and 'questioning', and so He said to him, 'Never say [anything] until God wills [it] by permitting you to say; in that way you will be a sayer through Him, through His will. In other words, never say regarding anything that you resolve to do tomorrow, 'I shall do that' unless you have completely enveloped yourself by the divine will by saying, 'If God will [it]'. So never ascribe an action to your own volition, but [always] to that of God, and in this way you will be a doer through Him and by His will.

[18:24] [...] *And remember your Lord,* by returning to Him and [seeking] presence, *if you forget,* because of forgetfulness at the manifestation of the soul and [because of] variegation at the manifestation of its [the soul's] attributes. *And say, 'May be my Lord will guide me to [something] closer than this,* that is, to remembrance (*dhikr*) at the [point of] variegation and ascription of the action to its attributes, by means of fixity and the essential presential vision (*shubūd dhātī*) that is clear of the veils of the attributes, *by way of guidance,* by way of uprightness, which is the fixity [granted] in the essential presential vision.

[18:25] *And they tarried in the Cave three hundred years,* of the kind based on the lunar cycles, so that every year represents one month, the total being twenty five years, which was the time of their alertness and vigilance, *and remained there in addition another nine,* which is the duration of a pregnancy [?]. Within the verse a delightful detail is taken into account, which is that He did not say [and they tarried in the cave] *thalāthami'ata sanatin wa-tis'an* or *thalāthami'atin wa-tis'ata sinīna*, because *sana* is conventionally used [to denote] the time of the descent of revelation during a solar cycle and not a lunar one. And thus He mentioned the [total] number collectively [without differentiation] but then clarified it with His [other] words, so that it is possible that the specific [unit] is something other than that, such as a month, for example.<sup>114</sup> He then made it clear that the [total] period was an ambiguous and unspecified number of years. For if it had been said *thalāthami'ata shabrin, sinīna*, whereby *sinīna* substitutes for the total number, the sentence would have been sound, the intended meaning being 'such a number of years', namely twenty five. This is supported by His words afterwards:

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<sup>114</sup> It is not possible to tease this out from the English translation, but the point centers on the use in the verse of the indefinite *thalāthami'atin*, which does not make it dependent necessarily on the following word *sinīn*, as opposed to saying *thalāthami'ata sinīn*. Thus, the sentence may be read 'and they tarried in the Cave for three hundred, years [note the comma before years] ...'; in other words, 'and they tarried in the Cave for three hundred [months], [a period of many] years ...'.

[18:26] *Say: ‘God is more knowledgeable of how long they tarried.* Qatāda said, ‘These are the words spoken by the People of the Book and completing where they had said *They will say ...* [Q. 18:22]. And His words *Say: ‘God is more knowledgeable...’* is a refutation of them. In the codex (*muṣḥaf*) of ‘Abd Allāh [b. Mas‘ūd] it is: *And they said that they had tarried (wa-qālū labithū),*<sup>115</sup> that is because there is no verifiable or unvarying certainty [regarding the exact duration].

[18:27] *And recite that which has been revealed to you of the Book of your Lord:* it is possible that the *min* (‘of the Book’) denotes inceptiveness of purpose, such that the Book is First Tablet that comprehends all forms of knowledge from which revelation was given to those to whom it was revealed. Or it [the *min*] could be an explication of what has been revealed, with the Book denoting the Discriminating Intellect in both cases. *There is none who can change His words,* which are the principles of religion such as the affirmation of oneness and justice and various other such [principles]. *And you will not find, besides Him, any refuge,* to incline to, since such a thing cannot exist.

[18:28] *And restrain yourself:* a command to exercise patience with God and His folk and not to turn your attention to other than Him — this patience is the kind indicative of uprightness and fixity and can only be [realised] through God — *along with those who call upon their Lord at morning and evening,* in other words, continuously, being the affirmers of His oneness the disengaged indigent ones who seek nothing other than God and have no want of either this world or the Hereafter and who do halt with any acts or attributes, *desiring His Countenance,* namely, only His essence, calling on Him and not being veiled from Him by other than Him at the moment of the manifestation this [essence] at the daybreak of annihilation or at the moment of Its being veiled by them at subsistence. And so patience with them is patience with God, and the overlooking of them with the eye, which is forbidden, constitutes the turning of one’s attention to what is other [than God].

[18:29] *Indeed We have prepared for the wrongdoers,* namely, those who associate [others with God] the ones veiled from the Truth, on account of His words [elsewhere]: *Idolatry is truly a tremendous wrong* [Q. 31:13], *a, tremendous, Fire, and they will be surrounded by its pavilion,* of levels of engendered existence (*akwān*), such as the elemental natures, and the material species forms that comprehend hylic individuals; *with water like molten copper,* such as pus (*ghassāq*) [cf. Q:38:57] and vile excretions (*ghislīn*) [Q. 69:36], that is to say, the putrid fluids that are secreted by the bodies of the inhabitants of the Fire, darkened and containing fat with which they are succoured; or, [they are succoured with] their filthy slops; or, [they are succoured] burning torments and anxieties.

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<sup>115</sup> In other words, thus begins verse 25 in Ibn Mas‘ūd’s codex, as opposed to the standard *wa-labithū* (*and they tarried...*).

[18:30] *Truly those who believe*, by affirming the Oneness of the Essence, being the opposites of the idolaters, *and who perform righteous deeds*, in the way of acts that are sought for their own sake at the station of uprightness — *indeed We do not leave to go to waste*, their reward: the replacement of a pronominalisation with an overt noun is intended to indicate that ‘reward’ is merited by acts to the exclusion of knowledge, since it is on this basis that an advance in degree and level is merited.

[18:31] [*Those, for them there shall be*] *Gardens of Eden*, in the way of the three Gardens; *therein they shall be adorned with bracelets of gold*: that is, they shall be made ornate therein with different kinds of adornments in the way of the realities of the affirmation of the oneness of the Essence and the meanings of the entified self-disclosures of the Exclusive Unity (*aḥadiyya*). For, the gold adornments constitute the entifications, whereas the silver ones constitute the luminous ones of the [divine] attributes, as in where He says: *and they will be adorned with bracelets of silver* [Q. 76:21]; *and they shall wear green garments*: they shall resplendent, virtuous and radiant attributes that shall necessarily bring about joy; *of fine silk*: of states and bestowals, since these are subtler; *and [heavy] silk brocade*: of character traits and earnings,<sup>116</sup> since these are denser, *reclining therein on*, the couches that are the divine names, which are the points of origin for His acts, on account of their having assumed His attributes and of the fact that the attribute together with the Essence is precisely what that [divine] name is supported by in the Garden of attributes and acts. *How excellent a reward, and how fair a resting-place!*, in contrast with *How evil a drink and how ill a resting-place* [Q. 18:29].

[18:47] *And the day when the mountains shall be set in motion*: that is, [the day when] We remove the mountains that are the organs [of the body] by crumbling them and making them as ‘scattered dust’ [Q. 25:23]; *and you will see the earth*, that is the body, *exposed*, manifest, even and flat, simple as it had [once] been without form or compound, pure dust. *And We shall gather them*: the pronoun [‘them’] either refers to the aforementioned faculties or to individual human beings, *such that We will not leave out anyone of them*, ungathered.

[18:48] *And they shall be presented before your Lord*, at resurrection, *in ranks*, that is to say, standing in rows, standing according to different rank, none veiling another, each in his own rank. *‘Verily you have come to Us*: We say to them on that Day, ‘you have come to Us, barefoot, naked, uncircumcised and each on his own, in other words, *just as We created you the first time; rather you claimed*, by your denial of the resurrection, *that We would not appoint for you a tryst*’, a moment for the fulfilment of what you were promised by the tongues of prophets in the way of a sending forth [after death] and a resurrection.

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<sup>116</sup> States are ‘bestowed’, while stations are ‘earned’: see Chittick, *Sufi path*, 222.



[18:49] *And the Book shall be set in place*, that is, the Book of the mould that corresponds to what their souls contain of configurations of acts deeply-rooted in them. *And you will see the guilty apprehensive of what is in it*, because they found in it what they had forgotten about; *and they will say: 'O woe to us!'*: they call for the destruction by which they perished that was the [resulting] effect of corrupt beliefs and evil acts. *What is it with this Book that it leaves out neither small nor great, but [instead it] has counted it?*', and that is because the effects of their motions and their works, be they great or small, all remain in their souls, fixed in the celestial tablets of the souls, that is, accounted for therein, and these [effects] become manifest on them in differentiation at the second re-creation, and they have no way of escaping them; that is the signification of His words: *And they shall find all that they did present. And your Lord does not wrong anyone.*

[18:50] The signification of the prostration of the angels and Iblis's refusal has already been mentioned. As for His words, *He [Iblis] was one of the jinn*, [syntactically] constitutes incipient speech, as though someone had said, 'What was wrong with Iblis that he did not prostrate himself?', to which the reply is, 'He was one of the jinn', that is, [he was] one of those corporeal faculties that are concealed in matter, and that is why he transgressed, *against his Lord's command*, in other words, on account of his veiling himself with matter and its appendages.

[18:60] *And when Moses said to his lad*: the exoteric aspect of this is what is related in the stories of the prophets (*qiṣaṣ*) and there is no way of denying the miracles. As for its esoteric aspect, that is to say the following: and when Moses-the-Heart, said to his lad-the-Soul at the moment of its attachment to the body, *'I will not give up*, that is, I will not cease to march and journey, or, I will continue to march, *until I have reached the juncture of the two seas*, the meeting-point of the two worlds, the world of the spirit and the world of the body, which constitute the sweet and the salty within the form of mankind and at the station of the heart, *though I march on for ages*', that is, [though] I march for a long time.

[18:61] *So when they reached a juncture between the two*, in the all-comprehensive present form, *they forgot their fish*, which is the fish that swallowed Dhū'l-Nūn, may peace be upon him, as a type and not as that individual [fish], because their breakfast was before their arrival at this form externally from that fish which he had been commanded to take as a provision for the journey at the moment of resolve; *and so it made its way*, into the sea of the body alive as it had been at the first instance, *by burrowing*, a wide tunnel, as is related. Its [tunnelled] path to the sea remained open and was not covered over by the [waters of the] sea.

[18:62] *And when they had made the traverse*, the place of the separation from the fish and fatigue and hunger befell Moses, whereas he had not become fatigued during his

journeying and had not become hungry before that, according to what has been narrated, he remembered the fish and the nourishment it could provide and so he asked his lad [to bring them] the breakfast. He said, *'Bring us our breakfast*, because his [spiritual] state then was that of the daytime in relation to what comes before in the womb. *We have certainly encountered on this journey of ours much fatigue'*, which is the fatigue and hardship of being born.

[18:63] *He said, 'Do you see?*, what is it that has left me nude [as a child], *when we sheltered at the rock*, at the chest to suckle; *indeed I forgot the fish*, when we had no need for it — *and none but Satan made me forget to mention it*, that is to say, it was Satan that made me forget to remember it, substituting *an adbkurabu* for the [suffixed] pronoun [*hu* in *ansānī-hu*]. Moses had been asleep when the fish made its way into the sea in the way related, while the lad-the-Soul had been awake, and so Satan-the-Estimation, the one who had adorned the tree for Adam [cf. Q. 2:35-6], made Moses forget to remember the soul-the-Fish, since the state was one of distraction (*dbuhūl*). The 'way' that caused amazement was the aforementioned burrowing [made by the fish].

[18:64] *Said he, 'That*, in other words, that escape of the fish and its making its way in accordance with its innate disposition (*jibilla*), *is what we have been*, seeking. Because there can be found the juncture of the two seas where Moses had been promised that he would find someone more knowledgeable than him. For the ascent to perfection by close pursuit of the holy intellect can only be at such a station. *So they turned back, retracing their footsteps*, in rising to the station of the first primordial nature (*fiṭra ulā*) as they had initially been retracing their footsteps at the descent from the ascent to perfection until they found the holy intellect which is one of God's servants singled out for the privilege of [divine] solicitude and mercy.

[18:65] [*So [there] they found one of Our servants*] *to whom We had given mercy from Us*, that is, spiritual perfection through disengagement from matter and sanctification from direction as well as pure luminosity all of which are the effects of propinquity and with-ness, *and We had taught him knowledge from Us*, in the way of holy gnosés and God-given universal realities without the medium of human instruction.

[18:66] As for his words, *'May I follow you*, this is the manifestation of the [spiritual] desire for wayfaring and the ascent to perfection.

[18:67] *'Truly you will not be able to bear with me*, since you are not privy to matters of the Unseen or spiritual realities as you have not disengaged, but are veiled by the body and its coverings and so you will not be able to bear my company; and that is the signification of his words:

[18:68] *And how can you bear with that whereof you have never been informed?'*

[18:69] *He said, 'You will find me, God willing, patient,* because of the power of my preparedness and my steadfastness in staying the path, *and I will not disobey you in any matter'*, on account of my orientation towards you and my acceptance of your command because of my purity and the sincerity of my [spiritual] desire. All of [these] negotiations are taking place by the tongue of the state.

[18:70] *'If you follow me,* in the wayfaring along the path of perfection, *then do not question me concerning anything,* in other words, you must follow [my] lead and persevere along the journey with works, acts of self-discipline, [noble] character traits and exertions, and not demand realities or significations, *until,* the moment for that comes along and then, *I [myself] make mention of it,* that is, of that knowledge, *to you'*, and inform you about the Unseen realities upon your disengagement through interactions belonging to the mould and to the heart.

[18:71] *So they set off until when they embarked,* on the ship of the body that has reached the limit of self-discipline, when it is good for servanthood, [travelling] to the world of holiness across the sea of primordial matter as it journeys to God, *he made a hole in it,* that is, he diminished it by means of [spiritual] discipline, by decreasing [his intake of] food, weakening its workings, upsetting its regulation and enervating it. *Said [Moses], 'Did you make a hole in it to drown its people?'* that is, did you break it in order to drown in the sea of primordial matter the animal and vegetative faculties that are in it so that it might be perish? *You have certainly done a dreadful thing'*: this denunciation is an expression of the manifestation of the soul with its attributes and the inclining of the heart to it and the dissatisfaction with being deprived of its shares during the act of [spiritual] disciplining and its lack of contentment with its duties.

[18:72] *He said, 'Did I not say [that] you would not be able to bear with me?'*: a spiritual warning and a holy incitement to the effect that resolve during the wayfaring should be stronger than that.

[18:73] *He said, 'Do not take me to task on account of that which I forgot,* to the end [of the verse]: an apology at the station of the self-reproaching soul.

[18:74] *So they set off until, when they met a boy:* this is the soul, which manifests itself with its attributes and thus veils the heart accordingly becomes an evil-commanding soul. The slaying of him is the extinguishing of anger, passionate desire and all of the [other] attributes. *'Have you slain an innocent soul:* an objection [arising] from the heart's affection for the soul.

[18:75] And [the statement]: *'Did I not say to you,* is a reminder and a spiritual expression.

[18:76] And [the statement]: *'If I ask you about anything,* to the end [of the verse] is an apology and an affirmation of guilt and an admission, all of which constitute variegations at the engendering of the self-reproaching soul.

[18:77] *So they set off, until, when they came to the folk of a [certain] town*, [folk] being the corporeal faculties. Their asking of them for food is a demand for spiritual nourishment from them, that is, by means of them, as when universal significations are extracted from the particular perceptibles of these. They refused to extend them hospitality, even though they had given them nourishment before that, because their nourishment at that point came from above them from the holy lights and from the self-disclosures of the Beauty and the Majesty and [from] the divine gnosés and the significations belonging to the Unseen, and not from below their feet as had been the case before the holing of the ship and the slaying of the boy by means of spiritual discipline, when the faculties and the senses prevented that and were not facilitating it. Nay, these only become configured after they have become somnolent and quiet, as when Moses said to his family, ‘Wait [here]’ [cf. Q. 20:10]. As for the wall which was: *about to collapse*, this is the reassured soul. It is referred to by the [expression] ‘wall’ because it originated after the slaying of the evil-commanding soul and [after] its [the latter’s] death by means of spiritual disciplining, and so it became like a thing that is inanimate, unable to move by itself and by its own desire and because of the extent of its feebleness it nearly perished. Thus its state was depicted as one ‘desiring to collapse’. As for his straightening of it, that is the setting of it in order by means of the perfections of character traits and the beautiful qualities of excellence by the light of the rational-speech faculty until the qualities of excellence came to replace its attributes of vice. As for Moses’ words, *Had you wished, you could have taken a wage for it*, is a variegation of the heart, not of the soul, which is the demand for wage and reward by the acquisition of qualities of excellence and by the use of acts of spiritual discipline, which is why the other responded to him with the words:

[18:78] *‘This is the parting between me and you*: in other words, this is the separate reality of my station and yours and the difference between them and the separation between my state and yours. For the cultivation of the soul through spiritual discipline and the assumption of praiseworthy character traits are not intended in anticipation of reward or wage. Otherwise, these would not be qualities of excellence or perfections, since a meritorious quality is to assume the character traits of the divine such that the acts that issue from that person are intended for their own sake and not for some other purpose. What is [done] for some other purpose is [in reality] a veil, a vice and not a quality of excellence. What one ought to do is to throw off the veil and to remove of the cover of the soul’s attributes and to become projected into the world of light in order to receive the significations of the Unseen, nay to become qualified by the divine attributes, nay to be realised in God after being annihilated in Him, and not for the sake of reward, as you [Moses] claim. *I will inform you the interpretation of that which you were not able to endure with patience*: in other words, when the soul is reassured and the faculties have become stable, you will be able to accept [Unseen] significations and

to receive the Unseen which I had forbidden you to inquire about ‘until I had made mention to it of you’. Now I shall make mention [of things] to you and I shall inform you of the interpretation of these matters if you are prepared for the reception of meanings and gnosés:

[18:79] *As for the ship, it belonged to poor people*, in the sea of primordial matter, that is [it belonged to] the corporeal faculties such as the external sensoria and the natural vegetative faculties. He referred to these [faculties] as *masākīn* (‘poor’) because of their constant stillness (*sukūn*) and their adhering to the dust of the body and their ineffectualness in contravening the heart during wayfaring and conquering it, as with all of the animal faculties. It is related that these [poor] were ten brothers, five of whom were chronically ill with the other five working at sea, which is itself an allusion to the [five] external sensoria and the internal ones; *and I wanted to make it defective*, by means of spiritual disciplining lest the-king-the-evil-commanding-soul should seize it by force. This was the king who was behind them, that is, in front of them, *seizing every ship by force*, by taking possession of it and using it for his own vain desires and pursuits.

[18:80] *And as for the boy, his parents*, who were the spirit and physical nature, *were believers*, affirmers of the Oneness by virtue of their yielding as they wayfare in obedience of God, submit to God’s command and comply with what God desires from them; *and We feared lest he should overwhelm them*, totally cover them, *with insolence*, towards them by manifesting himself in his I-ness at the presential vision of the spirit, *and ingratitude*, towards the grace of having them by his disobedience and evil action; or with ingratitude for the veil so that he ends up spoiling for them their affair and their religion and invalidating [for them] their servanthood of God.

[18:81] *So We desired that their Lord should give them in exchange one better than him in purity*, as He did by giving them in [his] place the reassured soul which is better than him in purity and unblemishedness, *and closer to mercy*, to being loving and merciful since it [the reassured soul] is more affectionate towards the soul and the body and more beneficial to both and more compassionate towards them. It is possible that by ‘parents’ is meant that the grandfather and the father, and so they figuratively stand for the spirit and the heart, in which case his [the boy’s] being ‘closer to mercy’, means that he is more suitable for them and more intensely affectionate [to them].

[18:82] *And as for the wall, it belonged to two orphan boys [who lived] in the city*: that is, the twin rational faculty of the considerative and the practical that are severed from their parent, who is the holy spirit, because they have veiled themselves from him by means of corporeal coverings, or [he is] the heart that has died or was slain before perfection by the soul’s conquest of the city-the-body. *And beneath it there was a treasure belonging to them*, that is, the treasure of gnosis which is only actualised

through these two [faculties] at the station of the heart on account of the fact that all of the universals and the particulars are able to come together in it [the heart] in actuality at the moment of perfection, which is the state of coming of age and the extraction of that treasure. Some exoteric commentators relate that the treasure was scrolls in which there was [certain] knowledge. *Their father had been* — [this is valid] in the case of both interpretations — *a righteous man*: it is also said that he was a father from ‘above’ to them and God preserved them for him, in which case, he can only be the holy spirit.

The story of Dhū’l-Qarnayn is well-known. He was a Greek (*rūmī*) who lived in times not long ago. The [spiritual] correspondence [for this story] is as follows: Dhū’l-Qarnayn in this existence represents the heart which took possession of his two horns (*qarnān*), that is, his two setting points, the East and the West.<sup>117</sup>

[18:84] *Indeed We established him*, throughout the land of the body by empowering him and giving him the fixity to be able to gather wealth from universal and particular meanings, and to [be able to] journey to whichever region of the East and West he wishes; *and We gave him to everything*, that he desired, in the way of perfections, *a road*, that is, by which to arrive thereat.

[18:85] *And he followed*, a path of attachment to the body and heading in the direction of the lower world,

[18:86] *until, when he reached the setting of the sun*, that is, the setting of the sun of the spirit, *he found it setting in a muddy spring*, namely, one that was mixed with mud, which is the corporeal matter, an admixture of dark bodies, similar to where He says *from a drop of mixed fluid* [Q. 76:2]; *and he found by it a folk*, namely, the egocentric faculties, the corporeal and the spiritual. *We said, ‘O Dhū’l-Qarnayn — either chastise*, by means of spiritual discipline, subjugation and bringing to death, *or treat them kindly’*, by setting them straight and fulfilling their share.

[18:87] *He said, ‘As for him who does wrong*, by being immoderate, and neither submitting or yielding, like passionate desire, anger, estimation and imagination, *we shall chastise him*, with spiritual discipline. *Then he shall be returned to his Lord*, at the minor resurrection, *and He shall chastise him*, by casting him into the Fire of nature, *with an awful chastisement*, that is, a terrible one that is more severe than mine; or [he shall be returned to his Lord] at the major resurrection, and He shall chastise him with the chastisement of subjugation and annihilation.

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<sup>117</sup> The paronomasia of Kāshānī’s statement cannot be appreciated in the English translation. The term *kbāfiq* also means ‘(throbbing) heart’ in Arabic and in the dual form is an expression used to mean the East and the West.

[18:88] *But as for him who believes*, by means of knowledge and gnosis, like the two rational faculties, as well as reflection and the external sensoria, *and acts righteously*, by hastening to acquire qualities of excellence and by yielding and being obedient, *he shall have*, as a reward, *the fairest thing*, in the way of the Garden of the attributes and the self-disclosures of Its lights along with Its rivers of knowledge; *and we shall speak to him mildly in our command*’, that is to say, a gentle speech by the actualisation of excellent habitus (*malaka*).

[18:89] *Then he followed*, a path, the path of ascent and wayfaring to God by means of disengagement and purification,

[18:90] *until, when he reached the rising of the sun*, that is, the rising of the sun of the spirit, *he found it rising on a folk*, namely, the two rational faculties, reflection, intuition and the holy faculty, *for whom We had not provided against it any [form of] cover*, that is, any veil, on account of their being illumined by its [the spirit’s] light and their perceiving of the universal meanings.

[18:91] *So [it was]*, that is, his affair was as We have described it; *and We encompassed in knowledge whatever pertained to him*, in the way of forms of knowledge, gnoses, perfections and qualities of excellence. The meaning of this is that none other than Us encompassed [him thus], since it was the Presence that combines the two worlds, and there is no one in existence that can comprehend the things which He knows except God [Himself]. And for some reason it is called God’s Throne.

[18:92] *Then he followed*, a path by wayfaring in God,

[18:93] *until, when he reached between the two barriers*, that is, the two engendered existences — that was his rank and original station, between the two sides of the two mountains of God; the marching east and west represent two journeys, one a descent and one an ascent — *he found on this side of them a folk*, namely, the natural faculties, the corporeal and the external sensoria, *that could scarcely comprehend speech*, on account of their being unable to perceive meanings or utter them.

[18:94] *They said*, by the tongue of [their] state, ‘*Truly Gog*, the exigencies and estimative murmurings, *and Magog*, the whisperings and imaginative tendencies, *are causing corruption in the land*, of the body by inciting to vices and passionate desires that violate order and [by] urging to works that result in its impairment and the ruining of the rules that regulate good-doing and the bases of wisdom and [result] in the bringing about of vicissitudes, temptations, vain desires, and innovations [all of] which conflict with justice and necessarily bring about the corruption of crops and offspring. *So shall we pay you a tribute*, by reinforcing you with our perfections and the forms of our perceptibles, *on condition that you build between us and them a dam?*, which they cannot traverse and a barrier which they cannot scale, being the legal limit and the veil of the heart in terms of practical wisdom.

[18:95] *He said, 'That wherewith my Lord has empowered me*, in the way of universal and particular meanings that are actualised through experience and journeying east and west, *is better; so help me with strength*, that is, [with] work and obedience, *and I will build between you and them a rampart*, namely, practical wisdom and the canon of the Law.

[18:96] *Bring me ingots of iron!*, in the way of practical forms and the conventions of works. *Until, when he had levelled up [the gap] between the two flanks*, by setting [things] right and ordaining, *he said*, to the animal faculties, *'Blow!'*, into these forms the blowing of particular meanings and egocentric configurations in the way of excellent character traits, *until when he had made it a fire*, that is, a form of knowledge in its own right, from among the totality of forms of knowledge, which contains an explanation of the modality of works, *he said, 'Bring me molten copper*, intention and purpose, *to pour over it'*, which comes halfway between knowledge and works and by which the spirit of knowledge is united with the body of work, like the animal spirit that is halfway between the human spirit and the body. There then was actualised a barrier, that is, a base and an edifice constructed from the ingots of works and the blow of forms of knowledge and character traits and the molten liquid of resolves and intentions, and the soul was reassured by it and it became governed and so it became faithful.

[18:97] *And so they were not able to scale it*, and climb over it because of the stature of its affair and its being comprehensive of forms of knowledge and arguments which they could neither repel nor take possession of; *nor could they pierce it*, on account of its becoming sturdy through habitus, works and invocations.

[18:98] *Said he, 'This*, barrier, that is, [this] canon, *is a mercy from my Lord*, to His servants, [one] which will necessarily bring about security and subsistence for them. *But when the promise of my Lord*, of the minor resurrection, *comes to pass, He will level it*, [making it] invalid and collapsed on account of the impossibility of using it at the point of death and [because of] the disintegration of the body's instruments [then].

[18:99] *And on that day, We shall let some of them surge against others*, tumultuously mixing. In other words, We shall leave them to mix on account of their coming together in the spirit without separation, *and the Trumpet shall be blown*, for the sending forth [from death] at the second creation, *and We shall gather them a [single] gathering*: or at the major resurrection, in the state of annihilation. The manifestation of the Truth which levels it because of the high stature of knowledge and wisdom there. The manifestation of the signification of the dissolution and licitness [granted by God] is by the self-disclosure of the divine acts and the nonexistence of the other and His act *And on that day, We shall let some of them surge against others* bewildered mixing as one thing without movement. And the Trumpet shall be blown by the existention through the existence of [God] the Truth at the state of subsistence and We shall



gather them a [single] gathering in the [reality of the] Oneness, uprightness and fixity, and in the fact that they will be in God and not in themselves.

[18:100] *And on that day We shall present Hell to the disbelievers*: that is, on the day of the minor resurrection those veiled from the Truth shall be chastised with all sorts of chastisements and fires, as mentioned in *sūrat al-An‘ām*; or [it is] at that presential vision when their chastisement in the fire of Hell is manifested to the one experiencing the major resurrection;

[18:101] *those [disbelievers] whose eyes were masked from My remembrance*, that is, veiled from My signs and [from] the self-disclosures of My attributes that necessarily entail My remembrance.

[18:108] [*wherein they will abide*] *with no desire to be removed from them*, [with no desire for] any self-transmutation (*taḥawwul*) since they will have attained perfection which their preparedness had entailed and so there will be no yearning for what might be beyond these [Gardens], even if there should be [another] perfection beyond that since they will have no perception thereof, and so neither tasting nor yearning [will they have beyond the Gardens]. The fact that they are the opposite of the polytheists who are veiled from the Truth by the other and the fact that their Gardens are the Gardens of Paradise (*firdaws*) both prove that the ones intended [here in the verse] are the affirmers of the Oneness (*muwahḥidūn*) of perfected preparedness, above whose perfection there is no other perfection and so there is nothing remaining beyond their rank which they would want to ‘change’ to.

[18:109] *Say: ‘If the sea*, the sea of primordial matter that is receptive to the forms that provide it [the matter] with manifestation, *were ink for the Words of my Lord*, in the way of meanings, realities, entities and spirits, *the sea would be spent before the Words of my Lord were spent*, since these [Words] are infinite and what is finite can never satisfy what is infinite. And God knows best.

ʿAbd al-Razzāq al-Kāshānī, author of this Sufi commentary on the Qurʾān is a major fourteenth-century mystic, Sufi, and scholar. This commentary, which is also known by the title *Tafsīr Ibn ʿArabī* and *Taʾwīlat al-Kāshānī*, is a key source for understanding the mystical thought and teachings of Ibn ʿArabī, an important and influential Sufi. In addition to insights into the spiritual significance of the Qurʾān, the commentary includes numerous references to traditions of the Prophet, explanations of ethical and mystical dimensions of religious life, stories of the prophets, and anecdotes about earlier mystics. Part I includes al-Kāshānī’s extensive Qurʾānic commentary on sūrahs 1 through 18.

### **About the translator**

Feras Hamza is Assistant Professor of Middle Eastern Studies at the American University in Dubai. He completed his doctoral studies in Islamic history at the University of Oxford in 2001. His dissertation examined the development of the concepts of hell and intercession against the sectarian background of the first two centuries of Islam. He worked on *An Anthology of Qurʾanic Commentaries*, co-edited with Sajjad Rizvi and Farhana Mayer. He has published a complete annotated translation of the popular Muslim Qurʾān commentary *Tafsīr al-Jalālayn* (2008). He has also contributed to the second edition of the *Encyclopaedia of Religion* (2005). His main research interests lie in the formative period of the Muslim community, particularly its early religio-political development, and the tradition of interpretative approaches to the Qurʾān, from the classical to the modern period.

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